Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Morgan
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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 a therapeutic residential care on a medium to long-term basis. It can accommodate two young people of either gender from the age of eight up to 18 years who display varying degrees of emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is a normal domestic property within easy walking distance of local amenities. There are good public transport links and the home also has its own vehicle.

The organisation has its own school for young people whose needs cannot be met within mainstream education at this time. Children and young people enjoy high levels of support in school and they are able to access the National Curriculum. Therapists provide the third main part of the service. Children and young people are encouraged to engage in activities that address previously unmet developmental needs, promote their self-esteem and enable them to experience success and achievement.

This is a time of some growth for the organisation, with new personnel and properties being added. The new care manager has been registered.

Both the child and the young person currently in residence were able to contribute to the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating remains good as is the attention to equality and diversity. This unannounced, full inspection considers all aspects of care. One action is raised regarding monitoring the issues relating to therapists. This is identified because it is a critical part of the service that has not been properly monitored rather than because any concerns have been identified. Recommendations are made to ensure that placement plan goals are central to all the work with children and young people, which will help to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. A system of consultation with relevant people is necessary to ensure that care standards are as high as possible. Children and young people are insufficiently assisted to learn about their files and do not currently sign for money they receive. Maintenance of the property is slightly below an acceptable standard in some places. Matters raised last time have been addressed, including clarification of a behaviour management issue and several administration matters. Staff training is now up to date and being managed effectively. There are no major weaknesses and the service has the skills available to improve further.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, one action and five recommendations were made. The action related to the deprivation of food and drink as a consequence of negative behaviour. Staff clearly understand that this is unacceptable. Improvements have been made to the recording of processes affecting admissions and discharges. This means that, retrospectively, children and young people can see how and why these important decisions and events were made. The statement of purpose has been reviewed to ensure it correctly reflects the operation of the home and a development plan shows the plans for the future. Also, work is underway to ensure

that all policies and procedures are up to date, which is an important way of ensuring consistent and effective practices. A related issue is staff training and progress has been made to ensure that all the required matters are covered.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children and young people plan individual menus each week, which are displayed in the kitchen. They then go shopping for the food with staff. Full attention is paid to dietary issues, such as avoiding additives, and most meals are made from fresh ingredients. Other health-related issues are also addressed thoroughly, such as, regular attendance at dentists. Staff have received appropriate training in medicine administration and storage; the good health currently enjoyed by children and young people means there is minimal requirement for prescribed medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and young people are protected particularly well from bullying, absconding and other sources of harm. They know how to make a complaint and are not afraid to do so. Staff understand the importance of allowing children and young people to express themselves and of interpreting issues for those who are less articulate. There are ample opportunities for concerns to be raised with a wide range of adults, both verbally and in writing, and when notifiable issues arise they are reported to appropriate agencies, such as placing authorities.

The home provides children and young people with high levels of physical safety for example, regarding attention to fire safety. Staff undertake each fire drill with one of a range of scenarios in mind to ensure that drills are as effective as possible. Safety of children and young people is also assured by effective recruitment procedures that are reflected in files on site. Visitors are properly supervised.

Children and young people benefit from a well-structured home that rewards acceptable behaviour and gives them maximum help to address their less acceptable behaviours. Examples of the effective structure include high staffing levels and good levels of privacy. In addition, policies and practices are in place to encourage appropriate behaviour and are clearly effective, for example, in reducing violent behaviours. Monitoring and planning to meet individual needs in this area is especially thorough and strong and includes frequent reviews of the methods of intervention. Of particular benefit here is the coordination between the home, the therapists and teachers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Individual support is of a particularly high standard and is always available to children and young people. At present, these derive solely from emotional and behavioural difficulties arising from their backgrounds, rather than specific cultural or religious needs. Every child and young person receives individual support from staff at home and at school.

Children and young people benefit in particular because of the effective combination of services they receive. Therapy, based on cognitive behavioural therapy, is an intrinsic part of all placements, alongside care and education. Improvements have been made recently to ensure that it is rigorously monitored, for example, regarding the qualifications and supervision of the

practitioners. This is particularly significant because the type of therapy provided is successful but not common.

The education of children and young people is excellent in terms of its contribution to their welfare. Individualised education, such as one-to-one input, is necessary to address complex needs, and is provided on a daily basis. This is successfully integrated into daily care in a variety of ways but most significantly by care staff always attending school. Children and young people make significant progress in their education, for example, by attending college. In addition, they are able to pursue particular interests and develop confidence in their skills, for example, by attending clubs such as Girl Guides, either with or without staff. Children and young people enjoy interesting, varied and stimulating activities, including holidays arranged to meet their individual needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Comprehensive procedures are used to ensure that children and young people move-in as sensitively as possible. Satisfactory placement plans outline their needs and cover the three main areas of support; care, education and therapy. However, there is insufficient information about how targets will be addressed and, subsequently, about their implementation. This means that greater progress is potentially possible in achieving children and young people's placement plan goals. They are consulted about the content, though, as are their social workers, for example, at statutory reviews. Reviews themselves are well organised and ensure that all areas of care are considered, including, for example, family contact. Good arrangements are in place to make family contact as profitable as possible for children and young people, given the circumstances of each family.

Children and young people are helped to make decisions about their lives all the time and influence the way the home is run. Methods of discerning their views are appropriately amended for each person. For example, children's meetings have become individual meetings with their own minutes. These are also an important part of quality assurance in the home but the issues arising are not adequately reviewed or acted upon. Similarly, there is insufficient consultation with other stakeholders. On the other hand, staff display a high level of commitment and there are very positive relationships between them and children and young people, which means that major issues are identified promptly.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily life of the home provides each child and young person with good opportunities to develop important life-skills. Individually, they are routinely involved, for example, in decision-making, expenditure, shopping and catering. Similarly, they are taught important social skills and are given opportunities that will be of value in adulthood. Albeit of relatively minor impact, insufficient emphasis is being placed on children and young people's involvement in record-keeping, for example in signing for their financial transactions.

Children and young people enjoy homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a reasonable standard. It is in a good location and has a good sized garden. Although the property is generally well presented, shortfalls exist in some carpeting. Also, in some areas of

decoration, there is peeling paintwork; the downstairs toilet has an inappropriate lock that cannot be overridden, and a folding door that is stiff and poses a risk of trapping fingers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are specifically trained to understand the importance of equality and diversity and to address these matters with the children and young people. As indicated in this report, individual care issues are addressed well and aim to maximize the opportunities available to children and young people. At the same time, there is substantial overlap with education, which considers issues of diversity, such as culture and religion, as part of the curriculum. Christian and community festivals are celebrated. These topics are also reflected in conversations between staff and children and young people at home.

The equal opportunity policy is reflected both in the statement of purpose and a satisfactory children's guide.

The statement of purpose describes the staffing policy, which is implemented in practice. Each child or young person has a designated member of staff at all times who are, themselves, well supported and trained. Staffing levels for child-care purposes are good but are under review to ensure all administrative tasks are routinely completed. It is to the credit of the service that such issues are effectively monitored and addressed. Staff adhere to tight schedules and display good levels of competence, for example, regarding their consistency and patience with children and young people. The files for children and young people are generally well-kept by staff and cover all the necessary matters. Children and young people benefit from staff who are well trained. Staff competencies are monitored effectively and new courses obtained when necessary. New staff benefit from specific training before they begin work and have a mentor to assist them; this is good practice.

There is regular and thorough monitoring of the home by both the manager and an independent person. The organisation is developing and altering and this is reflected in the home as practices are reviewed and improved.

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
7	ensure there is proper provision for the care, education, supervision and, where appropriate, treatment, of children, with regard to therapeutic techniques. (Regulation 11(1)(b))	16 November 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure the placement plan for each child sets out clearly how their needs are to be met on a day to day basis, the contribution to be made by staff, and how effectiveness is to be assessed; and, that the requirements of the plan are implemented in day-to-day care (NMS 2.1 and 2.2)
- ensure there is consultation with parents or significant others and provide feedback to them, and to children following consultation, including after children's meetings (NMS 8.5 and 8.7)
- ensure that children sign their money records (NMS 11.8)
- ensure the home is maintained in good order throughout, with regard to decoration, carpets and the downstairs toilet. (NMS 24.1)