

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	16 March 2010
Inspector	Sharon Treadwell
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	12 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 is a large detached house, with four bedrooms, located on the outskirts of a rural village. The home is able to accommodate three male or female young people ranging in age from 10 to 16 years. Although rurally situated, the home is close to a large town and is located only 30 miles from a major city centre.

All young people have single bedrooms, there is separate sleeping accommodation for staff on duty at night and there are adequate bathroom and toilet facilities. Communal facilities include a kitchen/dining room, lounge and utility room on the ground floor and 'the den' on the first floor, which is used for craft work, homework and for young people needing individual time. The den is sometimes used for education if young people are out of school and for any therapeutic work undertaken with young people by the provider organisation's therapy team.

Summary

This is an unannounced, interim inspection. The key inspection of the home, in October 2009, resulted in an overall judgement of good. Most key standards have not been revisited during this inspection and that judgement therefore remains appropriate. This inspection has considered the progress the home has made in implementing the three recommendations, identified during the key inspection, and has revisited all of the key standards under staying safe.

This is an enthusiastic and committed staff team who strive to provide focused, individualised care to young people who have often had very disrupted placement histories and who, as a result, often exhibit extremely challenging behaviours. Robust placement planning guides staff well in meeting young people's identified needs and there is a demonstrated dedication to prioritising young people's safety and well being and to endeavouring to promote better future outcomes.

Over a considerable period some of the young people have caused significant damage to the property. The staff have undertaken some work to address this but some areas are still in need of redecoration and refurbishment.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Three recommendations were made during the key inspection of the home in October 2009. Two of these related to a demonstrated lack of clarity about the type of placements provided by the home and to how procedures for admitting young people in an emergency ensured the home's capacity to meet those young people's needs alongside those of young people already in placement. There are now clearer statements, with regard to these issues, in the home's Statement of Purpose, and apparent recognition of the need for the manager and staff to be fully consulted about the potential impact of any proposed admissions on existing residents. The third recommendation reflected the impact of young people taking out their anger on their environment and was for the home to ensure that the interior and exterior of the home was maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair and that any damage was repaired

promptly. Some repair and redecoration work has been undertaken but there are still areas of the home requiring attention.

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.

Good attention is given, within the home, to keeping young people safe. Notices, in the office, warn staff that no-one is to be admitted to the home unless their identity has been verified. Staff demonstrate good awareness of their responsibility to maintain confidentiality in relation to information and to respect young people's privacy. All young people have single bedrooms and appropriate records are retained, when room searches are conducted, to detail the concerns prompting them and any items removed.

There have been some instances of bullying, since the key inspection, with young people accommodated at the home. The safeguarding concerns, prompted by this behaviour, were appropriately notified to young people's placing authorities and to Ofsted. The staff consider that some incidents arose out of very unstable relationships between two young people accommodated at the home, one of whom has now moved to another placement. Staff demonstrate good awareness of the need to be vigilant in relation to changing relationships between young people and written records indicate that bullying is challenged, in a very pro-active way, through both individual and group sessions. Records additionally demonstrate that, where appropriate, staff involve other professionals, such as young people's schools, in challenging bullying behaviour.

Young people are made fully aware of the home's complaints procedure and staff ensure that a copy is obtained of their placing authority complaints process, should they need support to access this. No complaints have been received since the previous inspection. The home has received two compliments, one from an on-call manager commenting on the professionalism of the staff team at this home and one from a young person's parent, again commenting on the professionalism of the staff and detailing: 'communication was excellent' and 'I could trust yourself and the staff to act in his best interests'.

All young people have a positive handling plan detailing the potential challenging behaviours they may be expected to exhibit and clarifying what could trigger such behaviours as well as identifying some strategies for managing them. All staff have received restraint training and the deputy is a qualified trainer in positive handling techniques. Placement plans clearly detail the home's focus on taking positive action to diffuse situations in preference to using restraint. The fact that only one restraint has occurred, since the key inspection, demonstrate how successful this approach has been. Wholly appropriate records are retained in respect of physical interventions and sanctions and the latter reflect that consequences are relevant and that staff ensure that young people understand why a sanction is being used. Appropriate individual protocols are in place in relation to absences without authority and, where young people have a propensity to put themselves at risk regularly by going missing from the home, records demonstrate that staff endeavour always to prioritise their safety and well-being.

Placement plans are comprehensive and are well supported by robust individual risk assessments, which are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff say that these plans help them to 'look after

these young people extremely well' and 'work together as a team in a consistent way'. Positive steps are taken to keep staff, young people and visitors safe from fire and other hazards with regular servicing of fire fighting equipment, electrical installations and appropriate checks on water and fridge temperatures and on vehicles used to transport young people. The provider organisation's recruitment procedures have previously been found to be wholly appropriate in ensuring that young people are properly safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

No key standards have been fully inspected during this inspection and the judgement made at the previous inspection is therefore retained.

At the time of the key inspection it was noted that, although the Statement of Purpose described this home as providing medium to long term placements, several young people had been admitted as emergency placements and these had been of very short duration. This had proved destabilising for two young people, who are in long term stable placements at the home. Written records detailed some of these placements as 'directed referrals' indicating that the manager and staff, as those with the greatest awareness of the potential impact of any placement on young people already accommodated, were not being appropriately consulted. As recommended at the previous inspection, the home has reviewed its Statement of Purpose to reflect that placements should be of a minimum duration of 12 weeks. The staff team are very aware of the potential disruption that inappropriate referrals can cause to young people already in placement and confirm that some young people have, in the past, been placed inappropriately. Discussions with the operations manager, who oversees this home and the Registered Manager indicate improved recognition of the need for the potential impact of any referral to be carefully considered. The manager always completes an impact risk assessment, to consider any adverse indications, when information about new referrals is received at the home. The operations manager details that the provider organisation sticks closely to its protocols in respect of the information required from placing authorities to support requests for emergency placements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

No key standards have been fully inspected during this inspection and the judgement made at the previous inspection is therefore retained.

The sometimes unpredictable, and often disruptive, behaviours of many of the young people placed sometimes result in a significant amount of structural damage at the home. At the time of the key inspection many areas of the home were in need of attention. Flooding, caused by damage to a radiator, had left the young people's bathroom and the hall without any floor covering. Some work has already been undertaken. The young people's bathroom and the hall now have floor coverings and some decorative work has been commenced on the staircase and landing. Although the lounge, kitchen and the den are in reasonably good decorative order some areas of the home still require attention. The manager details that decoration is being progressively addressed and that young people are being very actively involved in choosing colour schemes and furnishings, in an effort to encourage them to value their environment.

The hall, stairs and landing, and in particular bedroom doors, require redecoration. It is good that there has been some recent reduction in damage to the property and staff are hopeful that this will help them to restore all areas to good order.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

No key standards have been fully inspected during this inspection and the judgement made at the previous inspection is therefore retained.

During the key inspection the home was recommended to review its Statement of Purpose, which detailed that young people would only be admitted in an emergency 'when the placement is clearly identified as likely to be medium to long term'. A number of placements had been made, which clearly did not meet this criteria. The Statement of purpose has been updated to provide clearer information for placing authorities and now states that any emergency admissions must be preceded by risk assessment and consideration of individual needs and must be 'clearly identified as likely to be a minimum of 12 weeks, with the view to being medium to long term'. All other elements of the Statement of Purpose have also been reviewed and updated.

The staff speak very positively about the support they receive from their manager, who they describe as exercising strong leadership, and from one another. They see themselves as 'positive role models' for the young people in their care and feel that they receive 'good and relevant training' to equip them to meet young people's identified individual needs. The registered manager of the home has recently been allocated senior manager responsibilities by the provider organisation. This involves her in a range of responsibilities, which reduce the time spent at the home. The manager and staff confirm that, at present, this is not impacting on the running of the home.

Unannounced monitoring visits, on behalf of the provider, are made every month. The reports of these visits, which are supplied to Ofsted in accordance with Regulation 33, are commendably comprehensive. They demonstrate a robust and thorough oversight of the operational practices of the home and indicate that the views of young people are carefully sought and given full consideration. The provider organisation has recently introduced a summary for young people, of the monthly report, to ensure that they are fully aware of the outcome of each visit to their home.

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):

- ensure that the interior and exterior of the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair and that any damage is repaired promptly. (NMS 24.3)