

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	3 March 2010
Inspector	Sharon Treadwell
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	9 June 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 located within a rural setting and provides placements for up to four young people, of both genders, aged from 10 to 16 years. The property is a large detached bungalow with large gardens suitable for outdoor play and recreation. Communal accommodation includes a large lounge, an education room, dining area and kitchen. All young people have single bedrooms and there are separate sleeping and bathroom facilities for staff sleeping at the home.

The home focuses on using outdoor pursuits as a basis for engaging young people, often with particularly challenging behaviours, who may have difficulty settling in more mainstream provision. The aim of the home is to offer short-term (maximum six months) and often emergency placements for young people who have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties, and who, according to the Statement of Purpose, 'may need positive interrupters to their current pattern of behaviour'. The Statement of Purpose details that placements of the following type are provided: bridging placements, respite placements, crisis intervention and assessment. The home has an on site school room, which is registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, providing education for the young people accommodated. A teacher is employed specifically to provide education to the young people resident at this home.

Summary

This is an unannounced, interim inspection. The key inspection of the home, in June 2009, resulted in an overall judgement of satisfactory. 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 two recommendations, identified during the key inspection, and has revisited all of the key standards under staying safe. The inspection has also reviewed interim management arrangements at this home, in the absence of a registered manager, who recently resigned.

Two young people are currently accommodated at the home. Young people are appropriately placed and records indicate that their identified individual needs are being appropriately addressed. Some good work is currently being undertaken to develop staff knowledge and skill levels, to increase their capacity to take on delegated responsibilities and to refine record keeping practices to provide a clear but concise demonstration of young people's progress towards identified placement objectives.

The home's central complaints record does not provide easy access to essential information and records do not demonstrate that young people are offered medical attention subsequent to physical interventions.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made during the key inspection of the home in June 2009. The home was not fully clarifying, in young people's individual placement plans or in placement records, how the incorporation of outdoor pursuits activities and individual key worker sessions were promoting the achievement of identified placement objectives. Records indicated that

staff did not always have a clear understanding of what consequences were acceptable and approved by the registered person when dealing with young people's challenging and unacceptable behaviours.

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.

All young people, accommodated at the home have single bedrooms and clear guidelines are available to staff should bedroom searches be required to promote young people's safety. Where staff have found it necessary to carry out personal searches of young people, for example where there are concerns about inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs, risk assessments clearly detail why these are necessary. Where concerns involve items young people may obtain during contact visits, the staff have liaised well with young people's families to encourage the families to prioritise young people's safety. Visits by the Regulation 33 visitor regularly review young people's capacity to make and receive private telephone calls within the home. When young people are involved in off site activities they have access to a mobile telephone to make personal calls. The most recent report by the Regulation 33 visitor details that the home has submitted a request for a separate telephone room to be built to further support young people's privacy.

Nine complaints have been received since the previous inspection. Several of these have been made by young people, accommodated at the home, indicating that they are well supported to appropriately access the complaints procedure. Many of the recorded complaints have resulted in notifications to Ofsted. The home's complaints procedure is wholly appropriate and is well summarised in the young people's guide. The home is diligent in obtaining copies of young people's placing authority complaints procedures and in securing contact details for their placing authority children's rights service. The central complaints record is somewhat confusing in the way that information is required to be completed. Often the central record makes reference to supportive documents stored elsewhere, such as the record of investigation or the written response to the complainant. Supportive information, indicating how a complaint has ultimately been resolved, is not stored in a clearly defined place, for example one record details that this information is in the previous manager's personal file. Whilst the acting manager was able to locate these records this is not wholly conducive to transparent recording. Where potential child protection concerns arise the home is diligent in notifying all relevant professionals to prompt timely investigations. All staff receive regular child protection training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to deal with potential disclosures by young people. Social workers of young people, previously accommodated at the home, have written to thank staff for their input with young people: 'This has resulted in him keeping out of trouble and there being a marked improvement in his behaviour'.

Bullying is not an issue, currently, within the home but staff are vigilant for its occurrence and individual sessions with young people ensure that they understand that the home will not tolerate such behaviours. There have been no recent absences without authority but appropriate protocols are in place with the police, should young people go missing from the home or whilst on off-site activities. Young people's positive handling plans detail potential adverse behaviours, and strategies for managing these, and young people are involved in compiling individual merit schemes to promote positive behaviours. Individual risk assessments are much improved, since

the previous inspection, and provide clearer identification of potentially unsafe behaviours and of the action taken to reduce risk. The previous inspection noted that sanctions issued by the staff were often overridden by the manager and this had the potential to be disempowering. A recommendation was made to ensure that staff had a clear understanding of what were acceptable consequences in dealing with young people's unacceptable behaviours, in order that staff could confidently respond to such behaviours with measures relevant to the incident and approved by the registered person. The acting manager confirms that he is using staff meetings and formal supervision to enhance the capacity of the staff team to manage the often challenging behaviours of the young people. Staff say that there is better sharing of essential information about young people and that they have been supported to better understand what they need to record and why. Records are appropriately monitored to ensure that sanctions are fair in relation to the misdemeanour being punished and in ensuring that physical intervention is never used to promote compliance. The central record relating to physical interventions does not record that young people are offered the opportunity to be examined by a medical practitioner within 24 hours.

No staff have been recruited to the home since the acting manager took up post. The home currently has five staff vacancies. Both the acting manager and the operations manager confirm that recruitment is currently being undertaken and that no staff will commence employment without completion of the required checks. Appropriate checks are made on fire safety and electrical equipment to promote the safety of young people, staff and visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

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

Outdoor pursuits activities are represented, in the Statement of Purpose, as an integral element of young people's educational and social skills development programme at this home. The previous inspection highlighted that young people's placement plans were generally a poor reflection of this. Placement plans did not give any indication of the range of activities young people were being encouraged to participate in or of how these activities were being managed to promote the achievement of identified educational or personal objectives. The home was recommended to better clarify the learning and development aspects of these activities. A new activity planner pro-forma has recently been developed to highlight the specific objectives of planned activities and to ensure that staff clearly record the impact on young people of work undertaken during these activities. Individual placement plans are now written in the first person to give young people greater ownership of them and to better demonstrate how staff will support them to achieve identified placement objectives. The plans detail a range of issues that will be addressed with young people through individual sessions. Records relating to outdoor activities now more clearly demonstrate how these sessions are used to engage with the young people on an individual level, and to contribute to their personal and social development.

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 staff are very aware that most of the young people admitted to the home have some very negative experiences of the care system and are often difficult to motivate and reluctant to engage in planning positively for the future. The provider organisation has its own independence training programme and the staff endeavour to encourage young people to take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided and to acquire crucial independence skills. Staff often find placing authorities slow to allocate leaving care workers and to develop and implement pathway plans when young people reach the age of 16. This creates particular difficulties when young people are placed some distance from their home town and the proposal is for them to return home to live independently or semi-independently. The home is able to demonstrate that their concerns regarding input from placing authorities are appropriately raised at young people's reviews.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

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

The registered manager has resigned from the home since the previous inspection. Ofsted has been appropriately notified of the interim management arrangements. The provider organisation is currently endeavouring to recruit a new manager. An acting manager, who has recently been appointed to manage one of the provider's homes in another area, is fulfilling the role on a temporary basis. The acting manager appears to be undertaking some good work in developing the knowledge and skills of the staff team and staff feel that there have been some positive changes to placement planning for young people and to recording practices. Staff say they are more aware of what needs to be recorded in young people's records and why. The acting manager is working to refine record keeping at the home and is aware that the current retention of individual placement diaries, many elements of which are duplicated in central records, can be confusing and the process of duplicating records reduces staff time available to spend with young people.

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 of the monthly report for young people 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 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 that records relating to complaints fully demonstrate that appropriate procedures have been followed by incorporating documentary of investigation and outcome and communications with the complainant (NMS 16.3)
- demonstrate that, subsequent to any physical intervention, young people are offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner within 24 hours (NMS 22.13).