

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	27 April 2010
Inspector	Dawn Taylor
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	1 December 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

Situated in a rural location this children's home provides young people, aged between 13 and 16 years of either gender, with a nurturing and safe environment. The home accommodates damaged young people, with difficult and challenging behaviour, who have often experienced multiple care and education placement breakdowns. The home provides one-to-one staffing with the maximum of three young people placed at any one time.

Summary

This inspection was a key, unannounced inspection visit. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed.

As a newly registered service this home would normally be judged as satisfactory in line with Ofsted guidance. However, due to the fact that this home was previously registered as part of a 'core and cluster' group of homes and has established policies, practice and comprehensive staff training, it has been judged as good. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were all assessed as good.

Young people were present during the inspection and participated in the inspection process. In their view this service is outstanding.

This service is effectively meeting the individual needs of the young people placed in line with their placement plans. A key strength of this home is its consistent staff team who are effective at creating a safe environment with clear boundaries to which young people positively respond.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each young person are actively identified and promoted by a professional team of staff. Young people are supported to access community health services to ensure good health. Each young person's particular health needs are identified in their health care plan. This information is effectively used by the staff team to ensure those needs are monitored and met. Well-maintained written records ensure placing social workers, carers or families, where appropriate, are informed of the current status of young people's health and well-being.

The home's staff work effectively and creatively with the company's therapy team. They are available to young people and the staff team and attend staff meetings on a regular basis where they provide valued support and insight.

Young people are provided with freshly prepared, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs and are healthy. Fresh fruit is always available as well as vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods. Young people are encouraged to learn about healthy lifestyles and nutritious food through participation in active leisure pursuits as well as meal planning, shopping and cooking. The staff team also grow vegetables in the home's spacious garden and were chitting potatoes ready for this season's planting. Strong staff practice is well informed by clear policies and procedures and an established training programme that includes first aid, food, health and hygiene and safe handling of medications.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's welfare and safety are promoted at all times by a professional and well informed staff team.

A high regard is placed on young people's need for privacy and confidentiality of personal information. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is a key strength of this home. Arrangements for addressing complaints, being missing without permission, behaviour management and health and safety are effective. The staff are trained, familiar and confident in using practice and procedures that safeguard young people. This results in significant progress and secures good outcomes for young people. Staff carefully consider how to meet young people's needs and work with them to manage specific behaviours and to reduce risks.

There is an effective complaints procedure and information about this is available to young people. Young people know how to complain and can name a range of people they are confident to speak to. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Bullying is not identified as a problem at the home. Bullying is totally unacceptable and is challenged on an individual and group basis when encountered. Staff are committed to ensuring that bullying in all its forms is addressed.

The staff team are very good at helping young people to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff are brilliant at noticing when young people do things well and reward achievements. There is an established consistent staff team who are effective at forming outstanding relationships with young people through effective communication and negotiation. This team achieves a united front that provides young people with a safe, secure environment with high ideals. Boundaries are set but not immovable and this results in young people feeling their views and opinions are respected. These key features result in low incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Young people are living in a safely managed home. Fire safety tests are undertaken within the appropriate timescales; a fire risk assessment has been completed and staff have received fire safety training. The manager reviews risk assessments on a regular basis or when new risks are identified, to ensure all are being protected from hazards.

The company operates a robust staff vetting procedure. Staff recruitment files contain clear evidence of recruitment checks that have taken place prior to staff being employed. This includes an appropriate enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check. The Registered Manager has recently completed safer recruitment training. All adults who visit the home are supervised appropriately by staff. This excellent practice ensures that young people are appropriately safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff team are proactive at forming positive relationships with the young people they support by listening to their opinions and needs. They are also effective at working with families and other professionals to develop further understanding of their individual needs. The staff team are flexible in their approach and use key worker sessions as well as daily discussions to ensure all support is individualised and in line with the young people's needs and wishes. Young people have a say in who their key workers are but they are also able to talk to anyone else in the staff team, who make themselves available at all times to discuss any matters or concerns.

Young people's educational needs are identified and met by the company's registered school. There is regular contact between staff at the home and education staff. Those young people who attend have a daily education report where points are earned. Those young people who do not attend education are supported by the home's staff team to participate in a programme of activities based out of the home. Reports are written and shared with the educational link who monitors and assesses academic achievements. This is not the home's normal practice and the staff team are to be commended for their commitment to this process. The Registered Manager and Principal are currently looking at ways in which communication between education and the home in this situation can be enhanced.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

With the support of a caring staff team young people are making strong progress in meeting identified needs. Each young person has a placement plan that clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the placement and how the day-to-day needs of the young person will be met. These are monitored by the Registered Manager and the young people's key workers. They meet with young people on a regular basis to ensure the requirements of their plan are implemented on a day-to-day basis.

Young people's needs and development, as set out in their placement plan, are also being effectively monitored through care reviews. These are taking place at appropriate intervals with the involvement of young people, who are sensitively supported to attend and to participate by the staff team and their key workers.

The staff team are also supporting young people to maintain constructive contact with their parents and family members. Contact arrangements are clear to young people because they are recorded in placement plans and the staff team are well informed. There is strong evidence in letters written to the home from family members that the staff are effective at supporting young people and forming positive relationships with families.

There are established procedures for supporting young people to move into and leave the home. These provide staff with clear guidance and practical options that ensure the most appropriate and sensitive approach can be implemented for each individual young person depending upon their circumstances. Prior to arriving at the home, information is gathered from the placing authority and where possible previous placements. This information is used by staff to establish initial boundaries that ensure young people feel and are kept safe. These are regularly reviewed and modified through the constant review of young people's progress in relation to their placement plans.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are proactively supported to develop all the skills they will require when they eventually leave care. Staff are supported by policies and procedures that promote the rights of young people to be actively involved in planning for their future and in the running of the home. Depending upon the interest, age and abilities of the young people, their need to develop life skills will be encouraged and supported.

The home is furnished, decorated and maintained to a high standard. Staff and young people state that it contains all the facilities they require. It is a warm and welcoming environment that the staff team and young people work hard to maintain. The home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose and function. The home provides ample space for communal and individual activity, for young people to be creative and for relaxation.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a current and up-to-date Statement of Purpose and children's guide that accurately describe what the home sets out to do for the young people it cares for. This information is supported by clear, up-to-date policies, procedures and staff guidance that are introduced to all staff during induction, mandatory training and a rolling programme of additional training. Staff are knowledgeable and promote the company's values and ethos. They feel that they are well supported by the home's Registered Manager. Over 80% of the team working at the home are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and higher.

A key strength of this service is the small consistent staff team who have good knowledge of the needs of the young people they support and are creative in meeting those needs. Support and guidance to staff are strong and provided through a clear management structure and established policies and procedures.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff receive training that helps them to understand the company's policies. This is linked to the legislation relating to equality and diversity and helps staff to develop professionally.

Staff rotas are well organised to ensure that young people are provided with enough staff to meet their needs in line with assessments of risk. Staffing levels are high, and consequently good levels of supervision are maintained for young people. Staff use handover periods effectively between shifts and the importance of teamwork is well acknowledged by the team. Young people feel they are well supported by a consistent staff team who know them well.

Practice and records are continually monitored by the home's Registered Manager through Regulation 34 reports and by the Regulation 33 visitor's reports. Where there are shortfalls, the Registered Manager has taken corrective action in staff team meetings.

Young people's case files are maintained to a good standard by the staff team and their key workers, and monitored by the home's Registered Manager and Regulation 33 visitor.

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

There are no recommendations.