

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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Date of last inspection	17 December 2008
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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

This service is a children's home. It provides three long term placements for young people aged between 10 years and 17 years. The accommodation consists of three single bedrooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing. The home is in a village approximately three miles from the town centre. It is close to shops, leisure facilities and public transport.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection to check on key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people. This is a satisfactory service with some inadequate features. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily, but their overall good health is not well-promoted. Good child protection procedures and practice safeguard the welfare of the young people and this is supported by good risk management practices. Education needs are very well met. This is a notable area of strength. Placement planning is good, but placement plans are not well recorded, evidenced or reviewed. Not all parts of the home are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. Staff are sufficient in number, but they are not well-supported or trained. There is only satisfactory monitoring of the quality of care at the home. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person was asked to maintain separate records for each young person receiving therapy. All therapy records are now in individual books.

It was recommended that the provider ensure that a minimum ratio of 80 per cent of all care staff complete National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The provider continues to allocate time and opportunities for staff to do this, but the target currently remains unmet.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are given choices about their food. The staff are aware of individual children's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. Children confirm this. The staff try to introduce the children to new foods to expand their tastes and options. This helps to ensure that the food served is both healthy and nutritious. There is always fruit available to eat as a healthy snack option. Children are encouraged to help shop for food and they are supported to prepare and cook meals. Children confirm this. Therefore, children enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They also have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. However, not all staff have received food hygiene training to ensure that they can prepare, cook and store food safely. Therefore, the children are not supported in their efforts by staff who are themselves fully competent.

Daily routines include encouragement of good personal hygiene and a healthy lifestyle. Reward based incentive schemes support this, but they are not reviewed for effectiveness. Personal healthcare plans are on file for all children. However, there is very little evidence of action taken

to meet the identified health needs of the children. Healthy activities are not well organised or encouraged leaving some children to spend excessive amounts of time playing computer games instead. Therefore, although children's health needs are identified, services are not always provided to meet them, and their good health is not adequately promoted.

The home's smoking policy does not allow the staff to smoke in front of children so that they present as good role models. Smoking cessation services are used regularly to support the children and promote their good health.

Medication is securely stored and the records are accurate. However, not all staff who administer medication are trained in medication matters to ensure that they know how to safely store, administer and record the medication that they are responsible for, and safeguard children's welfare. Similarly, not all staff have received training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Therefore children's welfare is not fully safeguarded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Details about children's care are recorded and stored appropriately to maintain good levels of confidentiality. Children have access to a private telephone, which is free to use for reasonable periods. This ensures that children's privacy is respected and the payment method is convenient. All children have a key for their bedroom to help them feel that they control that private space.

All staff have received training on complaints to ensure that they know what to do if a person complains about the service. The children know how to make a complaint because the staff have explained what to do and there is information in the children's guide about how to complain. Children confirm this. Independent advocacy services are commissioned by the provider and, where appropriate, children are supported in making complaints about the service. However, the complaints records do not always contain the required details because the outcomes are not always recorded. Therefore, complaints are not always satisfactorily handled.

The manager and staff have received child protection training. The provider has a good safeguarding procedure for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the children's safety. Therefore, the welfare of children is promoted and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

The sanctions policy is good, promoting the use of praise, encouragement and de-escalation of behaviours. Therefore, children are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. Physical restraint is rarely used to manage behaviour and where no other alternative exists. Staff demonstrate good knowledge of the subject and the associated law. Physical restraint records contain the required details. All staff have received training covering the use of restraint and they follow the home's practice policy.

Staff are knowledgeable about the risks to individual children. Good written risk assessments are recorded to enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each child during their known and likely activities. Therefore, children's safety and welfare are protected.

All staff and children have been involved in a fire safety drill to ensure that they are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire in the home. The fire safety check records are up to date. However, not all staff working at the home have received up to date fire safety training to assist them in minimising the risks to children in the event of a fire at the home. Therefore, children's physical safety from fire in the home is not fully protected.

All visitors to the home are recorded and the purpose for the visit is noted. There are good recruitment procedures and staff files are regularly audited to ensure that they contain the required information. All of the required information is present. Therefore, there is careful selection and vetting of all staff working with children in the home and there is monitoring of visitors to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The home has links with a range of helping agencies who can be commissioned to provide services to fit the individual children's needs. The records contain details of some individual support services involved in the health, care and education of children. However, the staff do not demonstrate sufficient appreciation of the individual children's needs and therefore, the children do not receive individualised support that is appropriate to their needs.

Education is particularly well promoted. Each child attends full time education. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and prepare children for the school day. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home study programmes. A laptop computer is available for each child to use for educational purposes. Therefore, the education of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood.

There is a good range of books, DVDs and games available for education and entertainment. However, there is very little evidence of children being adequately encouraged and supported to pursue leisure activities or particular interests. Activities are not well organised or encouraged, leaving some children to spend excessive amounts of time playing computer games instead. This denies children opportunities to socialise with children their own age, to build their esteem and to gain confidence in other skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Admissions to the home are planned and where possible the child and their family are involved in that planning. Children can visit the home before they move in. The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the children concerned. Therefore, children are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

The placement plans are not recorded with sufficient detail or clarity to inform the staff what they need to do to meet the identified needs of individual children. Some one to one work is undertaken to provide children with guidance, advice and support. However, the records of

these and the daily observation records do not reflect the content of the care plan or show the efforts of the staff to meet the identified needs of the child. Therefore, children do not have their needs assessed well, and poorly written placement plans do not outline how these needs will be met.

The children's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. This includes participation in the statutory reviews and internal reviews of the placement plan. Key workers produce monthly summary reports. Following reviews, placement plans are updated, but the content remains poor.

Children's contact is well promoted and facilitated to ensure that they can keep in touch with people that are important to them. Children confirm that they can have friends and family come to visit them.

Children are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. This includes daily group discussion, key worker sessions and visits from children's rights advocate services. Children confirm this. Therefore, children's views are sought and acted upon.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

The organisation has a very good independence training package, but the children at this home are not encouraged to complete it. Staff cite a previous managers decision as the reason for this. There is very little evidence that children are encouraged and supported to keep their bedrooms in a reasonable state. Incentive reward schemes are implemented but they are not reviewed for effectiveness. Pathway plans are not always prepared and implemented in a timely manner. Therefore, children do not receive care which helps to fully prepare them for adulthood.

The interior and exterior of the home are not maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. Some parts of the home are worn out or not clean. Kitchen surfaces are damaged and unhygienic as a result. The garden is safe but not well maintained as there is litter and other debris all around. There is a maintenance and repair programme for the building but staff say that it is a slow process to instigate it.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A written statement of purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a satisfactory children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Children receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they choose to live there.

There have been a number of different managers providing leadership of the home's staff and operation during the last twelve months. Senior management support has not been adequate during this time and the required notification to Ofsted detailing the changes and interim support arrangements was not received. There is a consistent staff team with a range of skills and experience among its members. However, many of the team have been employed at the home for a year or less. Staff supervision arrangements are not adequate. A permanent manager

is now in post but they are not yet registered with Ofsted. The manager demonstrated considerable willingness and capacity to improve care and safety at the home.

Not all staff are trained in the required safety and childcare subjects necessary to ensure their competency to meet the needs of the children. The target of 80 per cent of staff having achieved National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People is not yet met. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice.

A quality assurance system is maintained to monitor the welfare of the children in the home. Monthly audits are undertaken by the manager and unannounced monthly monitoring visits are carried out by the provider. A report of the findings is produced. This helps to ensure that the care of children can be adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. However, not all of the care and safety matters raised in this report have been identified and addressed. Therefore, there are only satisfactory measures in place to improve the quality of care provided and safeguard the welfare of the children.

Young people's individual case files are satisfactorily recorded and organised. They are confidentially stored. Children are aware that they can access their files and they confirm that they have done so.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Examples of less than good practice are in areas such as safeguarding individuals, individual children's health care needs, and the monitoring of individual needs being met.

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
12	promote and protect the health of the children accommodated in a children's home (Regulation 20)	26 October 2009
13	make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21)	1 November 2009
13	ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification (Regulation 20)	1 November 2009
16	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24)	26 October 2009
26	make arrangements for all persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention (Regulation 32)	5 October 2009

15	ensure that children accommodated in the home are encouraged to develop and pursue appropriate leisure interests, and provided with appropriate leisure facilities and activities (Regulation 18)	1 November 2009
2	prepare in consultation with the child's placing authority a written plan for each child setting out, in particular how, on a day to day basis, she will be cared for, and her welfare safeguarded and promoted by the home. Keep under review and revise the placement plan as necessary (Regulation 12)	26 October 2009
6	ensures that there is a comprehensive plan for young people preparing to leave care and to move into independent living which specifies the support and assistance they will need to receive to enable a successful transition into adulthood, and which is implemented in practice and contributes to the Pathway Plan (Regulation 12)	26 October 2009
6	ensure that each young person beyond school leaving age has a Pathway Plan (Regulation 12)	1 November 2009
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained; and kept in good structural repair externally and internally (Regulation 31)	1 January 2010
34	give notice in writing of the arrangements which have been made for running the children's home during the absence of the registered manager and the arrangements that have been or are proposed to be made for appointing another person to manage the children's home during the absence	5 October 2009
29	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and supervision (Regulation 27)	1 January 2010
32	ensure that monitoring is effective enough to improve the safeguarding of the welfare of children and the quality of care in the home (Regulation 33)	1 November 2009
33	maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals which is effective enough to improve the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children (Regulation 34)	1 November 2009

Recommendations

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

- review the awarding of points and rewards as a blanket approach to behaviour management (NMS 23)
- register the manager with Ofsted (NMS 34)

- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a level 3 NVQ in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29).