

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
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Date of last inspection	22 April 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 run by a county council and provides care and support to young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The age range of the young people cared for is from 11 to 18 years old.

The main accommodation for the young people is on the ground floor. There is a first floor annexe which provides self-contained accommodation for one of the seven young people to experience living independently. The home is situated in a busy residential area on the outskirts of a large town centre and young people have easy access to a range of community facilities.

There were five young people living in the home at the time of the visit; four young people were in the building at some stage of the visit and three chose not to take part in the inspection. The Registered Manager was not present during the inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection visit during which all of the key standards, and some of the non-key standards, were assessed. There are strengths identified in this report and positive examples to show that staff take a child-centred approach to their work with the young people. However, there are some areas of weakness that potentially place young people's safety and well-being at risk and this has meant that the judgement overall is inadequate.

Overall, young people's needs in relation to health are met to a good standard. However, the written health information about each young person is not easy to access and the arrangements for staff to smoke do not set a good example to young people.

There are good arrangements for young people, parents and others to make a complaint. However, there are shortfalls in the recording of complaints. The systems to support staff to safeguard young people are inadequate. There are no internal safeguarding procedures or clear guidance for staff, which clearly set out all the actions to be taken. Staff could not easily access the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and the related guidance. The record keeping in relation to safeguarding is poor. Ancillary and agency staff are not trained in safeguarding matters.

The arrangements for supporting young people to manage their behaviour are good. However, prohibited financial sanctions are used as a punishment and some minor changes are needed in the recording processes. There are shortfalls in staff notifying Ofsted about serious incidents that happen in the home, including child protection incidents.

When there are bullying incidents staff deal with these well and make sure that the young person being bullied, and the bully, are supported. However, there are no risk assessments in respect of the times and places bullying is most likely to occur. When a young person goes missing there is joint working between staff and the local police to bring the young person home safely.

Most health and safety matters are addressed. However, a recommendation made by the local fire service is not being met. There is a formal staff recruitment process. However, referees are not asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with young people. Young people

are cared for by people who are committed in their roles and want to help them to achieve to their full potential. Individual day-to-day-care planning and the reviewing systems are effective overall. The minutes from statutory reviews for young people are not always forwarded to the staff by the external reviewing officer in a timely way.

The arrangements for the management of the home when the Registered Manager is not available are not robust. There are shortfalls in the monitoring and review of care arrangements and in the systems for the repair and maintenance of the building and its fittings.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Overall, the health needs of young people are catered for well in the home.

Young people are involved in menu planning and supported to choose meals that provide them with a healthy balanced diet. Young people's needs in relation to food preferences, such as needs arising from religious beliefs or an allergy to a particular food, are catered for. Young people are encouraged to do some cooking and this provides them with opportunities to develop skills they will need later on in life.

Young people's individual health needs are identified. They are supported in accessing services for routine checks, such as those relating to dental and optical needs, as well as specialist services to meet more complex needs. However, individual health plans are not developed for each young person and health information is dispersed across different files and folders. As this information is not easily accessible there is the potential that a specific health need may not be met.

Young people are provided with guidance, support and advice in relation to risky activities and behaviours, for example, the dangers of drug and alcohol use and smoking. This makes sure young people know that these activities are dangerous to their health. However, the arrangements for staff to smoke, while on duty, undermine this work. This is because young people can see staff smoking, just off the grounds, and can go and talk to staff while they smoke. This sets a very poor example to the young people.

Staff are competent in providing young people with basic first aid and in administering medicines to them. Medicines are stored securely and when medicine is given to a young person appropriate records are made. There are effective stock control systems and any errors made are addressed promptly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The overall arrangements for ensuring the safety and well-being of children living in the home are of a variable quality.

Young people's right to privacy is respected. For example, young people have keys to their rooms and all information about them is stored securely. There are arrangements so that young people, their families and others can make a complaint. However, not every complaint is recorded as a complaint in the central record; this means that the central record is incomplete and makes using the findings of complaints to improve and develop services difficult.

The arrangements for supporting staff to safeguard children are inadequate. There are no clear internal safeguarding procedures or guidance to support staff when they are dealing with safeguarding concerns. The officer in charge could not locate the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures promptly and this is the document that staff are expected to use. The records made of safeguarding concerns are poor and there is no written guidance for staff about recording these concerns. Not all staff, such as the ancillary and agency staff, are trained in safeguarding young people.

Young people benefit from good arrangements to make sure that bullying and racist incidents are dealt with effectively by staff. However, risk assessments of the potential times and places that bullying may occur are not carried out; therefore, not all of the risks of bullying are identified, or minimised. Young people are supported to learn how to manage their behaviour effectively and this is beneficial to them now and for their future. Young people who go missing are protected in line with robust policies, procedures and practice. There are very good joint working arrangements between the local police and the care staff. Police and staff work tirelessly to achieve a safe return home of any young person who goes missing.

All physical interventions, incidents and sanctions are recorded fully. However, all serious incidents, including those relating to physical interventions, are recorded in one volume. This means there is not a bound book dedicated to recording physical interventions as required. In addition, the detail of each physical intervention is contained in two places and not only in the bound book developed for this purpose. There is a range of sanctions used which are geared to supporting young people to modify their behaviour. However, one of these sanctions is the imposition of a financial penalty and this is not a permitted form of sanction. When a safeguarding issue or other serious event occurs Ofsted is not always notified about these.

There are systems to monitor health and safety issues. For example, there are sound individual risk assessments in respect of each young person and these help to minimise risks to their health and safety. Young people are involved in the fire alarm tests and the fire evacuation drills and understand these fire safety arrangements. However, staff, young people and visitors to the home are put at an unnecessary risk because the fire service's recommendations about wedging doors are not adhered to.

Overall, the systems to ensure that staff working in the home are suitable people to be working with the young people are sound. However, referees are not directly asked if they have any concerns about the suitability of the applicant in respect of them working with children. This could mean that key information is not obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a good level of support to meet their individual needs and wishes. They are encouraged to pursue group and individual interests and to develop appropriate relationships with their peers and others. Young people are supported to understand and

communicate their needs effectively, including those young people who do not have English as a first language.

Staff provide effective support to young people and show a high level of warmth, and a caring attitude towards the young people living in the home. There was some friendly conversation between the staff and young people heard during the inspection, as was lots of laughter.

There are systems that support staff and young people to work together. These arrangements involve the allocation of a care team, to each young person, to ensure that all care needs are met. Young people benefit from the sound risk assessments carried out in respect to their individual needs as these help to ensure that any risks to them are minimised. Young people who are seeking asylum benefit from living in the home as staff take a robust approach to ensuring their specific needs are identified and met.

Young people's educational needs are promoted well by care staff who work closely with the young people's schools and tutors. Care staff attend education planning meetings and support young people in meeting the plans. There is space in the home set by for study and a range of equipment, such as computers and books, are available for young people to use. Young people are provided with opportunities to take part in a range of activities; some engage in these and others choose not to.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

When a young person is admitted to the home staff ensure that they gather all available information about the young person. This information supports the development of purposeful individual placement plans for each young person and these plans guide staff in their work with each young person. Internal and external plans are subject to review and this helps to ensure that planning is kept up to date and in line with needs. However, although staff formally request the report of the review meetings, external reviewing officers do not always provide the reports promptly. This means that young people are not always provided with copies of their reviews in a timely way, and also means that the follow-up of actions agreed could be delayed.

Young people are supported, when it is safe and appropriate to do so, to maintain purposeful contact with people who are significant to them. Young people are kept safe from individuals who may pose a risk to them, such as contacts made over the internet.

All but emergency placements are fully planned and young people are supported to move into and out of the home in a planned and purposeful way. There are very clear expectations in respect to the admission of emergency placements and this supports staff to make sure, as far as is possible, that emergency admissions do not impact adversely on young people already living in the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people moving towards independence are supported well. One young person at a time can benefit from the flat available as a part of an independent living skills plan. This is a very

good resource as it allows young people to have a good level of independence, while living in a safe and supportive environment.

Each young person has their own bedroom and there is sufficient communal space for young people to socialise and relax with each other, staff and visitors. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms, if they want to, and they also make choices about the general décor in the home.

Overall the inside of the premises are kept clean and tidy; however, there are issues, on occasion, in the local authority's arrangements for property maintenance. This means there can be a considerable delay in getting things fixed despite care staff robustly requesting this. The external appearance of the property is spoilt by rubbish, such as cigarette butts, not being cleared up promptly.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The home's Statement of Purpose underpins the work of the home and provides information, for interested parties, about the functioning of the home. Young people are particularly well informed about what living in the home is like by a very informative written guide given to them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff have a good understanding of needs arising from young people's diverse needs and staff training and assessment processes in this area help to ensure needs are identified and can be met.

Young people benefit from having good staffing ratios. There is a good investment in supporting permanent care staff to care for young people. This support includes the provision of regular supervision and a good quality training programme. This enables staff to build up their knowledge, understanding and competence in caring effectively for young people. Staff develop positive, professional relationships with young people and this means some very positive work, which benefits young people, is carried out. However, agency members of staff are not provided with an induction training programme and this means these staff are not well prepared to meet the needs of the young people living in the home. There are arrangements for management cover when the manager is not working. These are not as effective as they should be, for example, in relation to the management of safeguarding issues.

There are systems for monitoring and reviewing the work carried out in the home but these are not effective as not all shortfalls are identified, for example, the issues found with the central complaints record, the effectiveness of the notification procedures and the use of prohibited financial penalties as a sanction.

Young people have a permanent, private and secure record to which they have access now, and in the future, to help them to understand their situation.

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
16	record the details of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24.5)	31 March 2010
17	ensure that a written policy is developed and implemented which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the home. Ensure that it sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse with particular reference to all points in Regulation 16 (2) (a) to (g) (Regulation 16 (1) and (2))	31 March 2010
17	ensure that the child protection procedures provide for the notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquires involving any child accommodated in the children's home to Ofsted (Regulation 16 (2) (c))	31 March 2010
20	ensure that notifiable events are notified to the relevant persons indicated in column 2 of schedule 5 (Regulation 30 (1))	12 March 2010
17	cease using any financial penalty as a sanction, other than the requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation (Regulation 17 (5) (g))	18 February 2010
26	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. This is with particular reference to implementing the recommendations of the fire service about not wedging open doors when rooms are not in use (Regulation 32 (1))	18 February 2010
33	ensure that the review of the quality of care is effective. This is with particular reference to the shortfalls in relation to monitoring visits identified in the body of the report. (Regulation 34 (1))	31 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people are actively discouraged from smoking with particular attention being paid to the arrangements for staff to smoke while on duty (NMS 12.6)
- develop clear written health plans for each young person with particular attention paid to all points in the standards (NMS 12.2)

- ensure that a copy of the Local Safeguarding Board procedures is easily available to staff working in the home (NMS 17.2)
- ensure that all staff know, understand and follow clear procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse in line with all points in the standard (NMS 17.3)
- ensure that the child protection procedures developed are consistent with the Local Safeguarding Board procedures, and ensure that they are submitted to the board (NMS 17.4)
- ensure the provision of training for all staff, including ancillary staff and agency staff in the prevention of abuse, recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse and the home's child protection procedures. (NMS 17.8)
- ensure that the written records made of the use of restraint are all contained in the bound and numbered book available for this purpose (NMS 22.9)
- carry out recorded risk assessments of the times places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest (NMS 18.5)
- establish if a person providing a reference has any concerns about the applicant in respect to their suitability to work with children (NMS 27.8)
- ensure that the results of all statutory reviews are recorded in the young person's file. This is with particular reference to this information being available in a timely way (NMS 3.4)
- ensure that the maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. Also ensure that exterior of the home is maintained to a good standard; this is with particular reference to ensuring the grounds are free from debris (NMS 24.3)
- ensure the overall competence of staff is satisfactory in relation to the fulfilment of any particular difficulties being experienced by the home. This is with particular reference to the management of safeguarding issues in the Registered Manager's absence (29.1)
- ensure that there is an induction training programme for all newly appointed staff. This is with specific reference to agency staff members (NMS 31.2)
- ensure that the monitoring checks carried out in the home effectively identify all shortfalls. (NMS 32.2)