

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC000802
Inspection date	30 July 2009
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	3 March 2009
--------------------------------	--------------

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 privately-run children's home is registered to care for up to four young people, of either sex, from 11 years old up to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people whose primary needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The house is made up of three floors. The ground floor comprises of a bedroom, a shower room with toilet and a combined kitchen and dining area. On the first floor, there is a communal lounge, the staff office and the manager's office. These offices also serve as staff sleep-in rooms. On the upper floor, there are two en-suite bedrooms. Separate to the house, across the rear yard, is an independent bed-sit annexe with bedroom, kitchen and toilet. The home does not have a garden.

There were three young people present during the inspection and each of them spoke separately to the inspector about the care they receive.

Summary

This was an unannounced, full inspection and so all the key national minimum standards were assessed. The inspection also assessed whether the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection on 5 March 2009 had been completed. These were about the young people's access to a telephone, notifiable events, supervision of staff and quality monitoring. There were 11 recommendations made about various issues including child protection policies and procedures, recording of sanctions and physical interventions, risk assessments and fire drills.

Overall, the home has made some progress and the outcomes are no longer rated as inadequate. But there are significant concerns about the quality of residential care plans especially for those young people whose needs have not been reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer. Health needs in particular, do not reflect what is happening in reality.

However, young people are cared for safely, although the risk assessment system does not measure risks suitably and child protection policies and procedures are not adequately clear for all scenarios.

Young people are encouraged to attend and achieve in education, training and employment but not all young people benefit from the potential outcomes which could be achieved here.

The house is well-decorated and is generally homely, although the regular slamming of a door fitted with a spring-closer detracts from the overall homeliness. The home has a useful independent annexe at the rear of the premises.

Suitable organisational arrangements are in place. The home is staffed appropriately and staff receive suitable levels of training. The Registered Manager formally monitors the quality of care every month although the views of parents, placing authorities and young people about such matters are not being recorded. There is therefore a risk that shortfalls may not be readily identified.

Although the staff aspire to give all young people equal opportunities, awareness of equality and diversity as a concept (particularly in relation to culture, religion and ethnicity) is not promoted, particularly proactively.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The arrangements to promote young people's privacy have improved since they now have a cordless telephone with separate line on which they can make and receive calls in private. Room searches, if necessary, are now also recorded appropriately.

There are still shortfalls in written policies and procedures regarding safeguarding young people and consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. The Registered Manager and staff still do not record the likelihood or severity of hazards in risk assessments and a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. However, the arrangements for safety have improved in other matters. For example, the missing from home records are now more descriptive, the Registered Manager and staff now notify Ofsted of all relevant incidents, young people are enabled to record their views about physical interventions and sanctions, fire drills are conducted at regular intervals and the Registered Manager is aware that prospective staff should meet young people and current staff before a recruitment decision is made.

Management arrangements have also improved. For example, staff now receive monthly supervision, all staff now have a personal development plan and the start and finish times of staff are now clearly recorded in the rota. However, the views of parents, placing authorities and young people about important matters of care are not recorded by the Registered Manager when he undertakes his monthly monitoring. This means shortfalls are less likely to be identified and addressed. Consequently, a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The staff prepare nutritional and varied meals for young people. Individual choices are promoted and young people help staff to shop for the food and so can exercise choice. Staff have received training in basic food hygiene and in nutrition.

Health plans are not up to date and important details are missing. It is therefore harder to be assured that young people's health needs are being met properly. However, healthy lifestyles are promoted through activities involving exercise and the staff provide information about personal, health, social and sex and relationship education as appropriate. Specialist advice is provided by health professionals as necessary, including support from a looked after children's nurse.

Medication records are patchy and some important information, such as stock levels are left unrecorded. The actual time that a young person receives medications is not recorded, leading to a risk that intervals between administrations are inappropriate. However, the staff have received comprehensive training in administration of medications. Full accountability is not being maintained because a copy of medications administered to young people is only being recorded in their case file, but not in the house records. This means that should the case file

be transferred, the home no longer has a copy of administration records. There is also no recorded parental permission in place allowing staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication if necessary and so there is a lack of accountability on these important matters.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The arrangements in place to promote young people's safety and welfare are sound.

Young people have the privacy they need when they need it. They have ready access to make and receive telephone calls in private. Any room searches, if ever necessary, are conducted properly. Young people are fully enabled to raise formal complaints and to raise issues with external agencies. However, most issues are dealt with quickly and effectively by the staff at an informal level.

All the staff have received training in safeguarding young people and they are knowledgeable about how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. However, the written policies and procedures are still not clear about how staff should respond if an allegation or suspicion of abuse becomes known to them involving the Registered Person or the person at the time in day to day charge of the home. Consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. Bullying is not evident in the home and staff are aware of how to respond should this arise. The staff also respond appropriately should any young person fail to return to the home on time.

The staff encourage positive behaviour by preferring to use rewards rather than punishments. Sanctions are fair although these are not used much. The use of physical intervention is also rare and only used in appropriate circumstances.

The premises are kept safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment and gas appliances. The staff regularly test the fire detection system which was fitted recently. This helps to promote the safety of people in the home. However, when the staff assess the risk of hazards facing young people, they do not estimate the seriousness or likelihood of such hazards. This means the risk assessment system is not adequately robust.

Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that new staff recruited to work with young people are appropriate.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive specialist support from professionals outside the children's home as and when necessary. For example, there are strong links with the child and adolescent mental health services and with child psychiatric services. Staff also provide personal, health, social and sex and relationship education as appropriate. There are limited resources available to promote awareness of the diversity of cultures and religions within British society. However, staff have received training in equality and diversity and they aim to ensure all young people have equal opportunities.

Young people are supported to engage and achieve in education. In reality, not all young people take up the opportunities on offer and so are missing out on the potential positive outcomes

to be gained here. There are good opportunities in the home to help young people learn. For example, young people have access to a computer and laptop with internet access and a range of books is available.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Outcomes in this area are poor. Statutory reviews are not always held. The children's home is not responsible for these reviews and the Registered Manager has tried to ensure the responsible authority arranges them. Accordingly, the staff and Registered Manager arrange their own internal reviews to ensure young people's needs are being met appropriately. However, the residential placement plans do not cover the issues pertinent to young people's actual lives and the plans are not updated when internal reviews take place. This means important information, such as health needs are not described in the plans and so there is a lack of accountability and a real risk that staff are not clear about how to meet needs. Residential plans also do not cover contact arrangements or arrangements regarding culture and religion.

The staff fully support young people to maintain contact with their friends and families.

The Registered Manager ensures that the home only admits young people whose needs can be met appropriately. However, such admission decisions are not recorded adequately. It is therefore harder to be assured that robust admission arrangements and accountability will continue to be in place.

The Registered Manager contacts placing authorities and parents to ascertain their opinions about the quality of care. However, they are not asked about the important matters which are recommended in the national minimum standards. Consequently, there is a risk that important shortfalls will be missed and so may not be put right. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the opinions of young people contribute to how the home is run.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has an independent annexe on the premises. This has a kitchen, toilet and shower and bedroom and is used to help prepare young people for independent living. It is a useful asset to the home. The staff help all young people prepare for independent living and teach such skills as cooking and budgeting.

The overall premises are well-maintained and decorated to a good standard. However, the house is not as homely as it could be due to a slamming door on the first floor, a broken door bell and an ill-fitting toilet seat.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisational arrangements are appropriate. The home has a statement of purpose and a children's guide, which provides useful written information for placing authorities and for young people. However, the staffing policy is not described adequately in the statement of purpose, so there is a lack of clarity about staffing matters, such as minimal staffing levels and the provision of ancillary staff.

Staff rotas are designed appropriately to ensure that staff have sufficient time to complete handovers, record-keeping and to spend one-to-one time with young people. 60% of the staff have achieved level 3 in the National Vocational Qualification in Care and the remaining staff are currently studying for this. The level of staffing is sufficient to meet the needs of the young people.

The Registered Manager formally monitors the quality of care every month. The relevant range of issues are assessed but the views of parents, placing authorities and young people on such matters are not being recorded. This means shortfalls may not be identified or addressed. Consequently, a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff aspire to treat all young people equally and to provide equal opportunities regardless of gender, age, race, religious beliefs or sexuality. However, the resources available within the home to help promote awareness of equality and diversity are limited and it is not promoted in a manner which could be described as 'proactive', particularly in relation to awareness of ethnicity, cultural and religious matters.

Concerns have arisen in recent inspections about the financial viability of the business. These concerns have now reduced but a copy of the recent accounts for year ending June 2009 would help to confirm this more positive assessment.

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
12	ensure that the residential placement plan describes the health needs of each young person (Regulation 12(1)(b))	3 August 2009
13	ensure that any medication administered to a young person is also recorded in the home's own medication file (Regulation 29)	31 July 2009
3	keep under review and revise the residential placement plan as necessary (Regulation 12(2))	7 August 2009
33	take into account the views of parents, placing authorities and young people when undertaking monthly monitoring of the care provided in the home (Regulation 34(3))	1 September 2009
34	provide Ofsted with a copy of the annual accounts for year ending 30 June 2009, as certified by an accountant (Regulation 36 (3) (a)).	15 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- obtain, and retain on file, prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each young person, for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication (NMS 13.4)
- record the actual time of administration of medications and the reason when non-prescription medication is administered (NMS 13.2)
- ensure that the child protection procedures include instructions for staff on action to be taken if an allegation or suspicion of abuse becomes known to them involving the registered person or the person at the time in day to day charge of the home (NMS 17.3)
- include a measure of likelihood and severity when assessing the risks of hazards to young people (NMS 26.2)
- ensure fire drills are also occasionally conducted at night (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that the residential placement plan for each child sets out the range of needs as described in the standard (NMS 2.1)
- ensure the outcomes of reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file (National Minimum Standard 3.4)
- ensure that when a child is admitted to the children's home, both the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents are recorded in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure the opinions and views of the parents of children at the home are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis unless inappropriate, including their views on the issues described in the standard (NMS 8.6)
- describe the home's staffing policy in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 30.4)
- prevent the slamming of the fire door on the first floor, repair the front doorbell and fix the toilet seat (NMS 24).