

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC001531
Inspection date	2 November 2009
Inspector	Simon Morley
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	26 June 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

The home is registered to provide accommodation and care for up to five boys aged between 11 and 17. If young people can not be restored to their family environment or placed with foster carers they will be supported at the home until they are ready to move into more independent accommodation.

The ground floor has two lounges for the young people to use, although one doubles as a staff room and office. There is also a separate office, kitchen diner, utility room and a newly refurbished games room. Upstairs there are five single bedrooms, bathroom and shower room. There are two staff sleep-in rooms both upstairs. The home is surrounded by gardens and a driveway which provides ample parking space.

The home is close to a main thoroughfare into the city centre and local amenities are nearby.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection covering all the outcome areas and to check compliance with statutory actions and good practice recommendations made at the last inspection.

Some improvements have been made to the safeguarding arrangements but not all the recommendations have been followed in practice. There are some good outcomes for young people with regards to their safety and support to enjoy themselves and do well at school or college. The home is suitably managed with one main weakness in relation to assessing young people's needs effectively and having adequate care plans that demonstrate how these needs will be met. The promotion of equality and diversity is good as is the overall quality rating.

As a result of this inspection the registered provider is required to: improve the assessment and care planning for individual children; improve the record keeping of children's needs and development; include safety measures in written risk assessments; and make explicitly clear in the policy and practice of police involvement.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Some improvement has been made to the safeguarding arrangements for young people living at the home. Not all the good practice recommendations made at the last inspection about safeguarding have been complied with.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health needs are well met. Health and welfare is effectively safeguarded by the home's policies, procedures and practice for good health promotion. This outcome area is judged to be good.

Staff work well with other professionals to help support young people's healthcare and ensure they have access to the necessary health services they need to remain in good health. Young

people are fit and active and enjoy a variety of activities that provide good exercise. Whilst healthcare records are kept regarding young people's health assessments, needs, and appointments these do not always show what a young person's individual needs are and how they are being supported. This has little impact on healthy outcomes as staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs and what support they require to keep in good health.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and planned menus are healthy and nutritious. There is good monitoring of young people's diet and if needed individual food diaries are kept to help promote good health. There are opportunities for young people to develop and learn cooking skills and they have good access to the kitchen where they can prepare drinks, snacks and do some cooking. Young people like the food provided and can have an alternative choice to the planned menu and get plenty to eat and drink.

Medication is securely stored keeping it safe. Records are generally well maintained but not always clear as to why young people have not had the necessary medication when they need it. Staff will try different approaches with young people who refuse medication and work with other health professionals to ensure young people remain in good health. Staff have first aid training to enable them to provide first aid and are trained to administer medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is good practice to help ensure young people are safe. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in this outcome area which is judged to be good.

Staff have all been trained in child protection and know what to do should there be any allegations or suspicion of harm so as to keep young people safe. There have been no incidents or allegations to refer to the local child protection team. There is good communication regarding young people's welfare with the relevant placing authority. Any significant events relating to young people are notified properly to the appropriate authorities to help protect the welfare of young people and ensure appropriate action is taken.

There are procedures in place to notify the appropriate authorities when young people are missing and to help ensure their safe return. These rarely have to be used and there has only been one occasion since the last inspection that a young person was missing from the home. There is good practice to ensure young people return safely and to support them from going missing to start with.

Young people are encouraged to behave well and staff work hard to keep a friendly peaceful atmosphere. Young people are generally free from bullying and staff will take action to intervene if there are any indications of bullying taking place. The behaviour management policy and practice is based on the use of praise, encouragement and de-escalation techniques to improve young people's behaviour. Sanctions are sometimes used for poor behaviour but physical intervention is not used to manage behaviour where no other alternative exists to keep young people or staff safe. In this case staff would call the police for support. This is not good practice and risks unnecessarily criminalising young people but the frequency of this is very low. Although young people are aware that high levels of aggression will result in police intervention this is still not explicit in behaviour management plans, policies and procedures regarding behaviour management.

Staff are trained in policies and practice about behaviour management and keep suitable records of incidents and sanctions. These records have improved since the last inspection and now have all the required information. Practice and records are monitored by the manager and monthly independent visits to help ensure young people are properly safeguarded.

Young people know how to make a complaint and they feel listened to. Staff will explain what to do and there is information around the home about how to complain. Young people feel that staff are approachable and will listen to their concerns and help them. Young people's privacy is respected, they have access to a private telephone and personal records about their care are now stored safely to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality.

There is a better approach to recording risk assessments which include up-to-date risks with regard to young people's known and likely activities, both permitted and illicit, the potential for bullying and abuse within or outside the home. These risk assessments and young people's care plans do not make it clear though what staff do to minimise risks and promote safety though in practice young people are supported to be safe.

Staff and young people have been involved in regular fire drills. Staff working at the home receive fire safety training and records of fire safety checks and other safety records are up-to-date and accurate to ensure young people live in a safe environment.

There are suitable employment procedures to ensure that only appropriate staff are employed to work with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good support, appropriate to their needs. They like the home and are happy with the support they receive. There are a range of different support services involved in the health, care and education of young people.

Staff encourage and support good school attendance. Education plans for individual young people are up-to-date. Staff use these to promote achievements and work alongside other support agencies when young people are not attending school to promote alternative learning programmes to mainstream schools. There is space, resources and facilities including computers and internet access within the home, to enable the completion of homework and support educational and learning. Educational achievements for young people are valued by staff who have developed strategies to promote good outcomes for young people. As other stakeholders put it: 'staff work really hard to support and encourage young people in relation to their education', 'they have gone above and beyond to support young people into schools that meet their needs'. This is a notable strength of the home.

Staff support young people with a variety of events, activities and trips that promotes individual interests, leisure pursuits and fitness. Again this is a notable strength of the home and staff are very keen and motivated to ensure a wide range of interesting options are available to young people. Other stakeholders have commented: 'there is lots of encouragement and support for hobbies, individual interests, social skills and development'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The admissions process for young people moving into the home includes an assessment of their needs and admissions are usually planned involving the young person and their family where appropriate. Young people and their families may visit the home before they move in. Usually therefore young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

The quality of placement plans detailing the individual support young people need is barely satisfactory. Whilst staff have access to a range of assessment information to help inform them of a young person's needs this is not well used along with relevant risk assessments to plan good individual support for each young person. This does not help to ensure young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively and that written placement plans that detail how these needs will be met are implemented in practice. However, in practice staff are knowledgeable about young people's needs and the support they require.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the young people at the home which includes

participation in statutory reviews with other professionals and the placing authority. Statutory reviews have taken place within the required timescales. This helps to ensure that young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly.

Young people's contact with friends and relatives is promoted and facilitated well. Details of contact arrangements are clear in young people's care records and staff know about any restrictions that are in place to help promote safeguarding. Young people can keep in touch with people that are important to them and they can have family come to visit them.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. They are consulted regularly about the home and their care and staff strive to ensure that young people can make choices about their care and support.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There is suitable support for young people to help them with the transition to adulthood. There are opportunities for young people to practice and learn life skills for example, cooking, cleaning, laundry and budgeting. Procedures and practice for assessing young people's needs and the support required to successfully complete the transition to adulthood are not well developed.

The home offers a good range of facilities and is exceptionally homely in nature. This is a notable strength of the home. The quality of décor, furnishings and space available to young people is very good. Young people all have a good size single bedroom and share shower and bathrooms. There is plenty of play room both in and outside the home where young people can watch television, play pool, darts and table tennis and use games consoles. Since the last inspection the games room has been completely redecorated and equipped and is very popular with the young people at the home. Young people can use the kitchen and there is ample dining space. Young people are involved in making decisions about the décor, furnishings and physical environment of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a statement of purpose available, to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. This is under review to ensure it reflects what the home does more accurately. Before admission staff will also provide as much information as they can about the home to young people so that they know what to expect if they come to stay there.

Young people benefit from being looked after by a competent staff team which has a broad range of skills and experience among its members. Some staff have the recommended care qualification and other staff are working towards achieving this so that the home can maintain the 80% target of staff who are qualified.

Staff are trained in a variety of safety and childcare subjects and there are good staffing levels to ensure they are looked after and are able to attend appointments, meetings and pursue their hobbies and interests.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care is based on young people's individual needs and there are good outcomes for young people as a result even though they are not always well recorded. Staff have been trained in diversity, ensure that menus are culturally diverse and efforts are made to ensure young people's cultural and racial needs are met.

The manager monitors practice and record keeping in the home. The manager has been able to make improvements since the last inspection and is seeking to improve the quality of care planning. Overall the home is managed well ensuring good outcomes for the young people living there.

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
2	ensure each child has a placement plan setting out how, on a day to day basis, he will be cared for, his welfare safeguarded and promoted; the arrangements made for his health care and education and the arrangements made for contact with his parents, relatives and friends. (Regulation 12(1)(a)(b) & (c))	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure the physical, emotional and health needs of each young person are clearly identified and form part of the individual's written health plan that meets the requirements of this standard (NMS 12.1 and 12.2)

-
- ensure that methods of behaviour management including police involvement are made clear in the home's Statement of Purpose, policies and individual placement plans of young people (NMS 22)
 - ensure that all written risk assessments include the action to be taken to reduce risks to an acceptable level where practicable and to avoid unnecessary or unreasonable risks (NMS 26.2)
 - ensure each child's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. (NMS 35)