

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC006921
Inspection date	16 August 2010
Inspector	Margaret Lynes
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	8 February 2010
--------------------------------	-----------------

© Crown copyright 2010

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 accommodate up to five young people. The Statement of Purpose specifies an age range of 12 to 16 years on admission, with the specific intention of providing an assessment service. This will be for a maximum of 16 weeks.

The home is a detached property with a large garden situated in a residential area close to shops, amenities and public transport.

One young person was involved in the inspection process.

Summary

This was a key unannounced inspection at which all relevant key standards were inspected. This is a satisfactory home with some good outcomes for the young people, particularly in positive contribution and economic well-being. Diversity and equality are suitably promoted and young people's views are taken into account. There is an adequate quality assurance system and complaints are dealt with in a satisfactory manner. Action has been taken to comply with most of the previously set requirements and recommendations.

This inspection visit has resulted in five actions and five recommendations. The actions relate to staff recruitment information; the recording of sanctions and restraints; the recording of menus served; the staff and young people's registers and the record of medication leaving the home. The recommendations relate to fire alarm tests; testing of portable electrical appliances; evidencing that staff have read the home's policies and procedures; maintenance of the premises and completion of the medical information sheets.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection had resulted in five requirements and six recommendations. The requirements related to the need to regularly maintain the gas installation; to carry out weekly tests of the fire alarm system; to ensure placement plans are regularly updated; to carry out staff supervision at regular intervals and to ensure that the records of sanctions and restraints are up to date and accurate. Action has been taken to resolve most of these areas. Fire alarms are now being tested almost weekly, whilst the log books for sanctions given and restraints imposed are in better order, these records are still not totally in line with the regulations.

Six recommendations were made at the last inspection. These related to the provision of an independent person; home insurance; staff qualifications; staff knowledge of the home's policies and procedures; maintenance of the premises and clarification of the purpose of the assessment that staff carry out on each young person placed with them. Action has been taken to improve matters in all but the latter two areas identified. Staff familiarity with the policies and procedures still could not be evidenced to any degree; whilst there remains a discrepancy between what the home actually provides and what it says it will provide in its Statement of Purpose.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Dependent on their age and ability they have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. Meals provided ensure that cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds are duly considered. Where staff have little knowledge of a specific culture or religious belief that has an impact on the type of food that is needed, they will carry out research so as to try to be as prepared as possible for each placement. Staff maintain a record of menus, which showed that a varied diet is planned. The record of food actually provided is not up to date. The home has achieved a two star rating from the local environment health department in relation to food hygiene. This indicates that the home is broadly complying with regulations. Food kept in the refrigerator is appropriately labelled and fridge/freezer temperatures are monitored daily.

Action is taken to secure medical, dental and other health services required to meet the needs of the young people. A written record is kept of all significant illnesses, accidents and injuries. The vast majority of the staff team have undergone training in first aid. The placement plan of one young person was examined. Within this plan was a specific section relating to health. It was supplemented with information from specialist health professionals. Staff have guidance relating to caring for the needs of refugee children and asylum seekers and this is an area in which the manager has requested specific training for the staff team from the proprietors. Staff can also refer to guidance in areas such as healthy living; personal care; alcohol; smoking; sexual health; health and hygiene; smoking; HIV; aids and drugs.

The welfare of the young people is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medication and providing first aid treatment. A written record is kept of all medication coming into the home. The same log is intended to be used for staff to record medication that leaves the home but staff are not consistent in completing these entries. The young person's file examined contained written permission from the person with parental responsibility for the administration of first aid and appropriate non prescription medication. No young person in the home was prescribed medication at the time of this inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people's privacy is respected. Each has a key to their own bedroom. There are procedural guidelines for staff to follow regarding entering young people's bedrooms; privacy; confidentiality; access to records; room searches; personal care; sexuality and personal relationships and gender mix and interaction. Staff sign a confidentiality agreement and information relating to the young people is stored in a lockable cabinet in the staff office. There is a payphone for the young people to use, situated in a relatively quiet corner of the home.

The young people are provided with guidance on how to complain in the guide to the home. Staff maintain a log of all complaints and this is supplemented with more detailed individual reports. The log showed that there has been just one complaint since the last inspection.

There are systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of the young people and to help to ensure that they are protected from abuse. Staff can access the in-house policy and procedure regarding child protection and also the local authority safeguarding procedures. Staff are expected to sign to say that they have read these procedures. Records did not indicate that many of the care team had done so. There has been one safeguarding incident recently, which

is in the process of being appropriately investigated. Staff receive training in safeguarding and child protection.

The manager stated that there have not been any concerns regarding bullying in the home. Staff are clear that bullying would not be tolerated and would be dealt with promptly. There is a policy and procedure in place relating to the prevention of bullying. Some staff have undergone training in this area, whilst the manager stated that more recently recruited staff will be able to access relevant training once the provider has updated its training programme.

Young people who are absent without permission are protected in line with the home's written policy and guidance. All episodes of unauthorised absences are logged. Staff have established a good relationship with local community police, who visit the home on a regular basis to meet the young people.

The young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour whilst unacceptable behaviour is challenged. There is a clear written policy, procedures and guidance for staff which set out the control, discipline and restraint measures that are permitted. Measures of control used to respond to unacceptable behaviour are appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people. The logs used to record both sanctions and episode of restraint do not contain all of the required information as set out in the regulations, albeit it was recorded elsewhere. Staff receive training in dealing with challenging behaviour, including restraint.

The young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from the risk of fire. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and fire alarms are tested approximately weekly. Fire fighting equipment is checked weekly, whilst staff carry out a fire precaution risk assessment every three to four months. General health and safety risk assessments are also in place, as are those relating to the use of substances hazardous to health. All risk assessments are reviewed at least annually. Gas installation maintenance is up to date. The electrical wiring was last tested in 2009. Testing of portable electrical appliances is overdue. As has previously been mentioned, the local environmental health service has assessed the home as broadly complying with food storage and preparation standards. Staff carry out a weekly walk around the home to check for health and safety hazards. They also carry out a regular health and safety audit. First aid boxes are checked monthly. The first aid box in the kitchen was well stocked.

There is a written recruitment procedure which is generally followed in practice. Two new staff have commenced work in the home since the last inspection. Some of the recruitment documentation was with the provider, but the files in the home contained most of the required information, including confirmation that Criminal Record Bureau checks have been carried out. However, some information is missing including an explanation of gaps in employment history and the reasons for leaving previous employment working with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose states that the aim of the home is to provide an observational assessment of the young people placed, however, there remains a lack of clarity as to what this means exactly. In addition to assessing each young person, in order, stated the manager, to identify the type of future placement that will be required, staff also seek to use the 16-week

placement to progress and develop the young people's skills in a number of areas. This is not clearly specified in the Statement of Purpose.

To this end, staff provide individualised support based on the particular needs of each young person. Staff use progress charts to establish a starting point and map progress and development on a monthly basis with regular input from a psychologist. Each young person is provided with a key worker, although they can approach any member of staff with a personal issue or concern. Support is provided for young people for whom English is not their first language with translators being made available. Following on from a recommendation in the last report, staff have now liaised with the local authority children's rights officer who can be contacted by the young people independently of the home.

There is an education policy in place, which is general to all of the homes in this group. There is also a specific statement relevant to this unit, which states that in-house education will be provided in the event there is a delay in finding a school or college place. Given that the young people are only in the unit for a maximum of 16-weeks, it is not uncommon that they receive in-house tuition. The home has established a good working relationship with an education provider for this purpose.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The placement plan for each young person, based on the Every Child Matters outcomes, sets out the assessed needs, the goals of the placement and how these are to be met. The plan consists of a number of elements including a daily living plan. The plans are monitored by the key worker and regularly updated. It is the responsibility of the key worker to ensure that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day to day care of the young person. A specific goal plan is put into place and key workers review this every two weeks. The young people are consulted about the contents of their plan and goal setting.

Key workers contribute to reviews of the placement. Where a placing authority is remiss in arranging statutory reviews the staff will arrange this on their behalf. The young person's file examined on this visit did not contain any evidence that such a review had taken place, however, staff gave assurances that it had and they were waiting for the minutes.

The young people are able and encouraged to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. There was evidence to show that where there were restrictions in place, staff were vigilant in ensuring the restrictions were adhered to. Contact arrangements, where these are in place are detailed in placement plans.

There are procedures in place for introducing young people to the home, the staff and other young people living there. The home's expectations are highlighted in the young people's guide and explained on admission. Both the needs of a young person and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents are taken into account when considering new referrals. There are also procedures in place for young people leaving the home.

The young people's opinions are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. There are systems in place for doing this including key working, house meetings and one to one sessions. Young people are periodically given a questionnaire to

complete, which asks them for their views of the home and the services being provided. Recently completed questionnaires are positive.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Although the unit has a specific remit and a time limited placement duration, staff evidently try to provide care which helps to prepare and support the young people into adulthood. If a young person comes into the home with a pathway plan in place, the manager gave assurances that staff would work with this. If it was evident that a young person should have a plan and does not, then the manager stated staff would work with the placing authority to obtain one.

The home provides good quality domestic style facilities for the young people, which is consistent with the purpose and function of the home and is maintained in acceptable order throughout. The communal areas were well furnished and homely. Each young person has their own bedroom. Three of the four available rooms were inspected. They were vacant but ready for immediate occupancy. The home benefits from a large rear garden and a home gym in the garage. Due to recent security concerns, additional precautions have been added including a locking system for all doors. This information has yet to be added to the Statement of Purpose. None of the new security measures prevent a young person leaving the home, but staff will be alerted if bedroom doors are opened. There is now a door release switch for the main entrance, which enables staff to keep it safely closed at all times.

All repairs and maintenance issues are logged by staff in a specific log. Examination of this log showed that a considerable number of the areas identified as needing attention had not been addressed. The manager stated that this was because the provider's maintenance man had to cover repairs in five of the provider's homes, thus the time they could spend at each home was limited.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff take into account the ethnic, cultural and religious needs of the young people. This is borne out by the efforts made recently to accommodate a Muslim child. Staff are enabled to attend training in diversity and equality. Case records are generally well kept and reflect the individuality of the young people. The home celebrates festivals and staff can refer to guidance on various cultures and religions.

The young people are guided through and know what services to expect from the home and how they will be cared for through the information in the young people's guide. This has recently been revised and reduced in size from over fifty pages to a far more manageable and readable ten. The Statement of Purpose provides the information required in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations, other than including information about the new security measures.

Staff commented that they felt supported and well managed. The previous inspection resulted in a requirement that staff supervision be carried out on a monthly basis and records kept. This requirement has been met. Each member of staff received an annual appraisal. These are detailed and comprehensive. Staff are provided with written guidance on the home's procedures and practice. As has been alluded to earlier, there is little evidence to suggest that the majority of

staff have read these. This was an issue that was also identified at the last inspection. Staff meetings are held monthly and are minuted.

The recent appointment of a new deputy means that there are now clear arrangements to cover in the manager's absence. Three of the care team have achieved a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 award while the remainder, with the exception of a newly recruited carer, have commenced the course. The staff disciplinary procedure makes it clear that a member of staff may be suspended pending investigation into safeguarding allegations or concerns.

At the time of this visit staffing levels in the home were acceptable. The manager is in the process of changing sleep-in night staff to waking nights, whilst the day rotas have been radically revised. These rotas have only recently been implemented and clearly staff were trying to become accustomed to them. The manager acknowledged that some staff had concerns over the new working patterns and gave assurances that the new system would be reviewed appropriately.

Staff receive training and development opportunities designed to equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people and the purpose of the home. This includes training in the assessment tool that is used. Some staff, as was apparent at the last inspection, are clearly still not fully conversant with this tool and as a result lacked confidence when discussing its purpose and aims. Other training staff have accessed in the last year includes safeguarding; care and control; medication; health and safety; risk assessment; restraint; care planning; recording skills equality and diversity and key working.

There are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home. In addition to monthly visits made under regulation 33, the manager carries out monitoring checks following a checklist based on the national minimum standards. This check is usually, although not always, carried out on a monthly basis. There are also a number of monitoring tools in use relating to health and safety.

Each young person has a permanent, private and secure record of their stay at the home. Each file contains the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations. Staff maintain a register of all young people admitted and discharged. This is not fully completed. The register of staff working in the home is similarly incomplete.

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
27	ensure that all required recruitment information is provided before new staff commence work in the home (Regulation 26(6)(b))	31 August 2010
35	ensure that the record in respect of each person working at the home, and the children's register are maintained in	31 August 2010

	accordance with the regulations (Regulation 29(2), Schedule 4(1)(2))	
22	ensure that the record of sanctions and restraints is maintained in accordance with the regulations (Regulation 17(4))	31 August 2010
13	ensure that an accurate record of all medication leaving the home is maintained (Regulation 29(1), Schedule 4(5))	31 August 2010
10	ensure that the record of menus served is accurate and up to date. (Regulation 29(1), Schedule 4(10))	17 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the medical information sheet, which provides information relating to, for example, a young person's general practitioner, is fully completed (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that fire alarms are tested weekly in line with in-house procedures (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that maintenance and repairs to the home are carried out without undue delay (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies and procedures and that this can be evidenced (NMS 28.8)
- ensure that portable electrical equipment is tested annually. (NMS 26.1)