

Inspection report for children's home

---

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC020608    |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 9 June 2009 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Trevor Hall |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key         |

---

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 17 October 2008 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](http://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 registration is for a small children's home providing accommodation for three young people aged 10 up to the age of 18, which has a separate single bedded satellite home close by, these home's share a manager and draw from the same pool of staff.

The main home is inconspicuously located, some three miles south of a large market town, the satellite home is on the outer edge of the same town. The accommodation in both settings is domestic in scale, the main house in a compact but comfortable detached family house with a sizeable rear garden, the satellite home is a small two bedded semi-detached property with a small rear garden, both homes afford individual bedrooms and have communal spaces downstairs. Each of the homes have their own Statements of Purpose, but operate all of the policies and procedures of the main house, both houses are manned by staff drawn from an extended staff group based at the main house.

### **Summary**

The inspection was an unannounced full inspection, the home's last full inspection was undertaken on 17 October 2008, when no actions and 3 recommendations were raised. The home was judged at that point to be good. This inspection looked at all key standards and several non-key standards. This inspection raised three new actions but made 22 new recommendations. Young people living within this home receive satisfactory support to remain healthy, are encouraged to enjoy life and to achieve well they are also encouraged to make a positive contribution to the life of the home. However, young people live in a home, that is currently failing to appropriately keep them safe and where the home environment is not being maintained to the standards required in the children's Home's Regulations 2001 or the National Minimum Standards (NMS). The home's management has been judged to be inadequate as it has failed to appropriately monitor the functioning of the home, to adequately assess risks that young people's behaviour is currently presenting and to properly supervise and support staff. The overall outcome of the home on this inspection was inadequate.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the home's last inspection, the fire alarm system has been serviced and the procedures to ensure that all fire alarm and fighting equipments are regularly checked and maintained have been improved. The satellite home continues to fail to have it's name on the certificate of Public and Employee Liability insurance as required by the NMS, nor was any covering letter available, indicating that the existing policy covers these premises, a further recommendation has been made. The home continues to fail to meet the requirement for 80% of staff to hold an appropriate child care qualification. This continuing shortfall, however, is due more to changes in personnel rather than by any lack of commitment to or provision of adequate training. All staff that have completed their probationary employment have either acquired the required qualification or are currently undertaking their training, these staff have also completed all their core training.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Menu records were examined and whilst it is clear that the young people are provided with a varied diet, the records lack detail and did not always record what was actually eaten as opposed to what had been planned. There is little evidence of any appropriate nutritional forethought within the menu planning process, which relies more on young peoples preferences and dislikes than any nutritional content. Young people are involved in the menu planning process which ensures that their likes and dislikes are known and accounted for. Young people are able to make drinks and snacks between meals and a range of fresh fruit is freely available. Every attempt is made to ensure that mealtimes are sociable occasions and these routines are promoted as being an important part of daily life in the home.

Young people, both in the main house and the satellite unit are provided with the necessary support and guidance to ensure their good health and wellbeing is maintained. Staff keep a range of records including individual health plans that detail medical, physical and emotional needs, however, it is important that all of these health care plans include all the information required by the NMS, are dated and are appropriately signed off by the home's manager. Young people can approach staff about health matters that concern them and staff try to ensure the right help and support is provided. The home encourages young people to attend routine health appointments and promotes these arrangements as being an important aspect to overall good health.

Most staff have up-to-date training in basic first aid, administration of medication and food hygiene. The home has appropriate consents in place that allow staff to give permission for emergency treatment if needed. Young people's medication is administered by staff and records show that medicines are given when needed or requested.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Within the main house, young people are currently not being kept as safe as they should be. The staff are supported by clear policies and procedures, however, maintenance issues combined with the very destructive and disruptive behaviour of the current residents have combined to seriously compromise these arrangements.

Young people's rights to privacy are promoted, however, this is being appropriately tempered by the need to provide appropriate supervision and support, given the unsafe and self-harming behaviour that is prevalent within the home at this time.

The home ensures that all confidential records are kept securely and that there are appropriate arrangements in place for young people to receive and make telephone calls in private. Where restrictions or specific contact arrangements are in place these circumstances are discussed in review meetings and recorded in young people's files.

Young people understand how to make a complaint if they have any concerns about their care. Details about the home's complaints process is outlined in the Children's Guide and staff provide information and additional support if young people require this. The home's records confirm

that young people have been able to access the complaints process and that generally this has resulted in an appropriate investigation of the complaints.

Young people's wellbeing is safeguarded because the home has clear child protection policies and procedures. All staff receive training in child protection and demonstrate a sound knowledge of policies and procedures and the action they would take if they became aware of any child protection issue. They are aware of their responsibilities to report any child protection concerns and the home enables staff to access a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

The home has an anti-bullying policy which makes it very clear that bullying will not be tolerated and encourages young people to raise any concerns they have about bullying.

Whilst staff are aware of the types of behaviour the current young people may display this awareness has not always been transferred into detailed assessments of risk. Many of the risk assessments that do exist are not up-to-date nor do they relate specifically to the home's current residents or the current care setting. Staff know how to respond to challenging behaviours and are trying to encourage the young people to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour after such incidents to enable them to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

The home has a policy of not wishing to criminalise young people, as such police involvement in the home is minimal and only used as a last resort, when individuals safety is likely to be compromised. The emphasis of the home is to try to promote consistent, improving behaviour, that can be both praised and rewarded, however, the opportunity to engage positively with some of the home's current residents have so far been limited. As a consequence of this policy, however, serious physical damage to the premises appears currently to be a regular feature of the home, with little or no obvious consequence or effective sanction. Whilst it is true that young people are clearly informed of the home's expectations of them and of the likely action that will be taken if behaviour is unacceptable, this appears to be having only a minimal effect on checking this unacceptable behaviour.

There is a written policy and staff guidance on the actions that should be taken if a young person is absent from the home without consent. The procedures and guidance follow a regional joint protocol, which has been developed to ensure young people's safety is promoted. The protocol also ensures that reporting processes are followed according to individual risks and circumstances. Staff work with young people to minimise and prevent instances of absconding from the home, so that young people are kept safe.

The recording of physical interventions and sanctions used within the main home is currently not good as many of the records are incomplete lack dates and have not been signed. Young people have not routinely been asked to comment on sanctions applied or when physical interventions have taken place, their refusal to comment has also not always been recorded. Restraint records indicate that 'unorthodox holds' have been used and lack essential detail to enable appropriate judgements to be made about appropriateness, or otherwise of some staff interventions. The regular monitoring of these records by the home's Registered Manager, as required both by the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the NMS, has not always taken place as such the home's management has not been in a position to ensure consistency or to reflect on the effectiveness or appropriateness of all of these interventions.

On checking the home's insurance certificates, it was noted that the certificate displayed within the home's satellite unit, does not state the address of the premises as required by the NMS, nor was any covering letter available, which stated that this premises was covered by the company's general insurance certificate. This deficiency was noted on the home's last inspection and needs to be rectified.

On inspecting the premises it was clear that a number of serious health and safety issues were apparent within the home, which although having been reported by staff, through the parent company's maintenance procedures, had not received the priority attention the potential had warranted.

A house vehicle which had been damaged by a young person had, rather than being moved to a safe place of repair been left on site, where more damage was subsequently inflicted. At the time of the inspection all of the vehicles windows had been smashed, including the sun roof, as had all the lights. Glass from the vehicle which was no longer securable was evident both inside and out of the vehicle and the home's records indicated that young people had take to sitting in the vehicle and causing further damage whenever they were upset or displaying inappropriate or anti-social behaviour.

Dangerous, live, exposed electrical wiring was evident in the home's spare bedroom and whilst it is true that the room was not occupied, it's door was not securable, this had been reported as a maintenance issue by staff, but no action either to repair the damaged socket cover or to secure the room door had been authorised nine days after the damage was reported.

The home's garden shed had been tipped over and one side had been completely ripped off exposing the contents of the shed as well as leaving large amounts of broken and splintered wood. The home's main oven door had come off and whilst there was no evidence that the oven had been used without it's door, it had not been disabled, as the hobs were still in use, both of these maintenance issues had been reported but no action had been taken to make the site safe whilst an appropriate repair could be arranged.

Generally positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from fire in the home. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire drills are completed at the frequencies required by the NMS, however, they are not currently being maintained at the frequencies indicated in the home's own policies and procedures nor at the levels previously maintain within the home's records. The home's fire risk assessment should be updated annually or whenever a significant change within the house significantly affects the assessment, this includes the admission of any young person whose history indicates they present a fire hazard, no such update was evident from the risk assessment currently on file within the home.

It was unclear if the home had conducted it's annual landlords gas safety check and none of the home's environmental risk assessments had been reviewed or updated to take into account the potential created by a new admission to the home.

Staff personnel files were not accessed at this inspection due to them being held at a central location at the organisation's head office. The organisations Area Manager confirmed that no new member of staff started work in the home until all the necessary vetting checks had been

completed. All visitors to the home are required to provide proof of identity and sign a visitors book to support the protection of young people.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are receiving a satisfactory range of individual support and guidance that is consistent with their identified needs. Staff have a positive attitude towards education and take an active interest in young people's development and learning. Young people are living in a home where they are consistently encouraged to enjoy and achieve.

Staff have access to a comprehensive range of information that identifies specific needs and support for each young person. A key worker system is in operation where a member of staff takes some responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of a young person's care and support. Records also take appropriate account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. Although some individual support is delivered through key worker arrangements, this process is not promoted to the exclusion of other staff offering support. It is clear that staff in the home work as a team and young people are able to approach all staff for help and support.

The home has made appropriate links with local psychological services and mental health teams to ensure that each young person receives the support and services they need. Young people, where appropriate, can also access the home's own therapist. Young people are supported to access specialist external services to ensure all their identified needs are being met.

Staff actively promote the social inclusion of young people in the home's daily routines and events. Staff are keen to support young people to develop their own interests and hobbies, however, this is dependent upon individual assessments of risk and appropriate behaviour from the young people. The regular review and updating of these individual assessments, necessary to keep staff informed about what they can do to reduce potential risks to young people, has not always been apparent.

Despite recent behavioural problems, which has impacted negatively on some of the home's recording systems, young people's care planning and support is still clearly focused on their overall plan of care, which matches the placing authorities aims and objectives in relation to future plans and placements. The Registered Manager and staff have a strong focus on organising themselves around young people and their needs which supports improving outcomes for each individual.

Young people's education is promoted through the home's education policy, it clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of residential staff in relation to school attendance and learning. Records demonstrate that staff are working in partnership with teachers to support an education timetable that includes academic and vocational activities.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are fully supported to make a positive contribution to their placement and future plans whilst living at this home. Staff demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of

young people. They are involved in all aspects of their care and are given every opportunity to contribute to their own care planning and arrangements.

Staff actively and formally seek the views of young people at an individual and group level and respond in a way that values their opinions. For example, young people are regularly involved in placement plan meetings with staff to discuss their needs and this information is clearly reflected in the home's records. Seeking young people's opinions and helping them make decisions about matters that affect them is fully integrated into the care practices of the home.

Close attention is paid to ensuring that the home's care records fully represent young people's current needs. Young people are involved in their care planning and have regular opportunities to discuss their needs with staff. Staff are successful at engaging with young people and are focused on achieving the stated aims and objectives of individual plans.

Each young person living within the home has a Placement Plan that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the placing authority's care plan for the young person will be progressed. Up-to-date Looked after Children's (LAC) documentation was not completed on each young person, however, this is reflective of the relative newness of one of the placements, rather than any failing on the part of the home. Young people's records demonstrate that staff are flexible and innovative in their approaches to managing young people's behaviours and in trying to promoting positive outcomes. Case files confirm that the young people's progress is reviewed within the statutory time periods. Staff attend regular in-house meetings to record and update each young person's general progress during the interim period. Monthly reports are completed by key workers and the home prepares chronological reports to keep placing authorities informed. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details.

Young people are able to maintain valued relationships with family and friends because staff support and help facilitate contact and visits. Young people's contact arrangements are consistent with their agreed plans and confirmed that staff support them to stay in touch with significant people in a way that is agreed and they choose.

Young people are given good support when they arrive and leave the home and these routines are based around individual needs and circumstances. Staff understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness is used to provide support and reassurance in these circumstances. Young people are encouraged to bring their own possessions into the home so they can personalise their own bedrooms.

Staff use a range of ways to consult with young people in the home. Young people have the opportunity to express their views and opinions in young people's meetings as well as through individual sessions with their key worker. Young people regularly meet with the Registered Manager as part of the consultation processes to ensure the head of the home is directly informed about their views and opinions. Staff are good at consulting with young people about the routines and daily living arrangements of the home.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is inadequate.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and are well informed about their entitlements because the home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money.

Overall, the main care setting within this registration is, comfortable and adequately furnished however, both the internal and external decoration is now in need for some attention. Much deliberate damage has been done to the fabric of the main house over the past few months and the behaviour displayed by the current young people has done much to reduce the homely appearance of the building. Many items of furniture, particularly bedroom furniture, require immediate repair or replacement and all damage that has safety implications needs making safe. On the day of inspection not all young people had a proper bed nor did they all have adequate lighting in their bedrooms. Live electric lighting cables were exposed in an area accessible to young people, the home's oven was without a door, the garden shed was over turned and had lost a side, strewn its contents into the garden and the home's vehicle was at the side of the building having had all its windows, sun roof and lights smashed. None of these issues had happened within 24 hours prior to the inspection, all were known about and all had been reported through the parent company's maintenance and repair procedures. Several of the more serious issues the exposed electrical wiring for instance had been reported more than a week prior to the inspection.

The company responsible for running this home provides general maintenance support through a contract with an outside company. All maintenance for the home including grounds maintenance, decoration and emergency repairs are done through this external company.

The current corporate maintenance policy, whilst sufficient and adequate to deal with the day-to-day issues of most children's homes, currently appears to lack the required ability to prioritise remedial/safety work within a home accommodating young people who are regularly displaying severely destructive behaviours. Whilst damaged furnishings and fittings are always made as safe as possible by staff as soon as it is realised that damage has occurred, the eventual substantive repair or replacement of these items is often unreasonably delayed by the current maintenance request system which requires permissions to be sought prior to even the most urgent of repairs being conducted.

The overgrown and poorly maintained grounds are not only unsightly, but make the effective removal of broken glass difficult, potentially create a situation, which could be dangerous both to young people and staff working within the home. The ability for the current maintenance arrangements to act quickly and decisively to the level and frequency of minor, but potentially harmful, damage in this home is currently questionable.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

This home is currently not an effectively managed home as the required management oversight of the home's recording systems, functioning, staff support and maintenance have had a negative impact on the care and support young people receive.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes all information, as required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations. The young person's guide is presented in a child-friendly way and gives a good summary of what young people can expect from the home.

Young people are generally being looked after by a staff group that is relatively experienced, and enthusiastic but which lacks the required level of qualifications in child care and appropriate guidance and support to ensure that their needs are met. Staff are adamant that the Registered Manager provides them with clear and effective leadership regarding the aims and objectives

of the service, but the home's records do not present the expected evidence that the manager has maintained the required degree of personal oversight and supervision to maintain good continuity of care.

On checking the home's staff supervision log, it was clear that the record of supervision has not been appropriately maintained, many entries were not signed, as such it is not possible to assess whether all staff have been receiving supervision at the frequency or for the durations listed in the appropriate NMS. It was clear that not all staff, currently still within their probationary employment period, had received the enhanced level of supervision expected.

Generally there is a good emphasis given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs. The shortfall in the home achieving the expected 80% of staff having achieved their NVQ level 3 in childcare is due more to changes in personnel rather than by any lack of commitment to or provision of adequate training. All staff that have completed their probationary employment have either acquired the required qualification or are currently undertaking their training, these staff have also completed all their core training.

Due to the increase in challenging and disruptive behaviour additional staff deployments have been made to the home above it's normal staffing compliment, as such the young people have been provided with appropriate levels of supervision and support in line with those indicated in the home's Statement of Purpose. The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing and challenging needs and circumstances of young people. There are clear and accountable systems in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the manager. Adequate management systems are in place to share information between different shift teams. Young people, however, are not always being appropriately nurtured and comprehensively supported because their needs have not always being met and the necessary assessments of risks, which should enable staff to effectively manage these risks in a preventative way, have not been completed, or need to be updated to refer to the current care setting and current care provision.

The home's Registered Manager is responsible for maintaining all of the records required by both regulation and the NMS, including a register of admissions and discharges from the home. The established systems that are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living in the home, have not been appropriately maintained, many of the records have not been endorsed by the Registered Manager and the regular self monitoring report for the last month had not been completed.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

The parent company for the home has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the home's registered manager. The company conducts monthly review meetings to look at welfare issues within their homes, findings are reported back to senior managers. Records seen demonstrate that the content of these reports reflect an accurate picture of life for young people resident here. These reports are available to staff. The last such report available within the home was for April 2009, the visit and report for May had been conducted in the last week of the month, as such it was still within the company's distribution system, however, senior managers confirmed at feedback,

that many of the concerns identified in this report, particularly those, in respect of lack of appropriate risk assessment and staff supervision had been identified through this procedure.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

## 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       |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 26       | ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety Regulation 23(a)                                                                                                              | 1 October 2009 |
| 26       | ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally (this refers to ensuring that young people do not have access to exposed electrical wiring) Regulation 31(2)(d) | 1 October 2009 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of menus (as served) demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet, this refers to records being kept of the planned menu in addition to the meals actually taken and for these records to be appropriately detailed to enable a degree of nutritional assessment to be undertaken (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that each young person has a clear health plan that includes all of the details included within NMS 12.2 and that all health plans are dated (NMS 12.2)
- ensure when disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them if possible in the records kept by the home (their refusal to do so should also be recorded) (NMS 22.14)
- ensure that all incidents of restraint are fully recorded including all of the areas detailed in NMS 22.9 and that these are signed by the person authorised to make such a record (this refers to instances of restraint being incompletely recorded or not being signed) (NMS 22.9)
- ensure that the registered person regularly monitors the home's records on restraint and sanctions and signs against each entry to confirm the monitoring has taken place (NMS 22.11)

- ensure that staff only use techniques of physical restraint authorised by the home's restraints policy and accurately record the type of restraint used (this refers to staff using the term 'unorthodox hold' when recording details of holds used) (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that all behavioural risk assessments are up to date and refer to the current placement and current young people (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that the home's fire risk assessment is reviewed whenever a significant change within the house occurs, this includes the admission of a young person known to present a significant fire risk (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that all dangerous materials are removed from the premises promptly to prevent risk to young people (this refers to broken glass, damaged car and the destroyed garden shed) (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that the annual landlords gas safety check has been completed (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that all fire checks, drills and tests are conducted with the frequencies dictated in the home's policies and procedures (NMS.26.8)
- ensure that the registered person of the home regularly reviews the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessments carried out (NMS. 26.3)
- ensure that the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. There is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. Gardens and/or hard play areas are well maintained and safe. (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that the broken oven is either repaired or replaced (NMS.24.3)
- ensure that the broken garden shed is either repaired or replaced (NMS.24.3)
- ensure that the broken unit vehicle is either repaired or replaced (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that all broken windows are repaired or replaced (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that each child has a single bedroom or their own area in a double bedroom, of a suitable size, with suitable bed and bedding, seating, storage for clothes, lockable or otherwise safe storage for personal possessions, a window with curtains (or other window covering), lighting sufficient to read by, carpet or other appropriate floor covering and heating (NMS 24.5)
- ensure that all staff receive formal supervision at the frequency and for the minimum durations as indicated in (NMS 28.2)
- ensure as soon as possible that 80% of the staff deployed to the home have completed an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualification in childcare. (NMS 29.5)
- ensure that the existing system to monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose is maintained with the frequency indicated in the homes policies and procedures and that the registered provider ensures that the home's performance is monitored in accordance with the Children's Homes regulations 2001 (NMS 33.1)
- ensure that the registered person of the home monitors and signs the home's records at least once a month to identify any patterns or issues requiring action (NMS 33.1).