

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC022464
Inspection date	26/11/2010
Inspector	Paul Gillespie
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25/11/2009
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 Crispins, 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 home is one of 11 children's homes that are owned and operated by this private company. The home provides care and accommodation for one young person with emotional and behavioural difficulties aged from eight to 17 years.

The home is a two-bedded terrace house and its location enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, a railway station, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres and parks. It is staffed on a one-to-one basis, with one member of the staff team sleeping within the home each night on a rota basis. The home's staff team are managed and supported by the Registered Manager, who is also registered as a manager for two other children's homes operated by the provider in the area.

One young person lives in the home and they took part in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

At this unannounced full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The main focus of the inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of young people living there since the last inspection.

This is a satisfactory service overall with a number of good outcomes. The home provides a friendly, safe and stable environment. Young people are settled and enjoy living at the home. They are well supported practically in preparing for transition to semi-independent living and receive good advice and guidance as they seek to secure meaningful employment. Young people described the support as 'really useful'. They are looked after by a settled staff team who offer consistent care and who are committed to their work. This has enabled young people to build positive relationships with adults based on trust and respect and to have consistent adult role models.

Three actions have been made as a result of this visit. These are primarily to address shortcomings in the securing key documentation, such as review minutes and pathway plans, which are important in directing the focus of the support required for young people. Additionally matters identified in regulation 33 reports require to be addressed in a timely manner by the Registered Manager.

Seven recommendations are made including: updating the Statement of Purpose; ensuring the home's plan for supporting young people is sufficiently comprehensive; more effectively evidencing how young people's views and those of their families and

others significant to them are sought; and reviewing the approach to sanctions that involve young people not having friends to visit. Also not all staff have a recognised childcare qualification to the required level, the frequency of team meetings does not currently meet the national minimum standards, and risk assessments do not contain sufficient detail of the known or likely activities, young people engage in.

Addressing these points will help ensure the focus continues to be on the promotion of welfare of young people and the quality of care in the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to ensure young people receive support from a consistent staff team. This has been achieved with records confirming that recent months have seen a settled core group of staff providing support. Also there was a need to ensure the placement plan set out how on a day- to-day basis the young people were to be supported. This has in part been met, although there is further work required to ensure this is sufficiently comprehensive and more clearly defined.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The staff work well to promote young people's physical health and emotional well-being. Young people are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician and staff are good at encouraging attendance at routine health checks. Their health needs are well monitored and further supported by clear procedures that staff are aware of and follow in practice.

There are secure arrangements for the storage of medication and records of any medication taken by young people are up to date and accurately maintained. Staff are trained in both the safe management of medication and first aid. They ensure that young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions. This practice helps to safeguarded young people's welfare.

Staff work alongside young people to help them increase their knowledge of basic nutrition and to ensure they receive a balanced diet. This includes young people being actively encouraged to be involved in purchasing food and preparing meals by managing a weekly budget. This helps in preparing young people for the transition to more independent services and learning valuable skills to use in future life.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people receive good advice about keeping safe and protecting themselves from harm. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities to

promote and safeguard young people's welfare and a sound knowledge of the procedures to follow. They also have access to the local safeguarding children procedures so they know what to do and who to contact should the need arise. Young people also confirm that they feel safe due to the level of support available.

The staff team demonstrate a sound understanding of risk assessment processes. There is standardised risk management documentation in place that captures a range of possible risks associated with young people's likely or known activities. However, this information does not sufficiently capture specific issues in adequate detail for example risks associated with contact arrangements.

The staff know the importance of taking the views of young people seriously and of listening to and responding to issues raised. Young people confirmed they know how to complain and commented they would 'have no problems speaking to staff' if they felt the need. They also confirmed that staff respect their privacy and believe that should they have any concerns they would be well received and acted upon by staff. The complaints procedure is accessible to young people and is suitable for their needs, age and level of understanding.

Young people reported that they do not experience bullying and have developed good relationships with friends within the local community. Although young people and staff did not report bullying as an issue, staff are provided with sound policy and procedural guidance on countering bullying as well as managing incidents should young people become missing from care. This guidance assists staff to keep young people safe.

The home's approach to behaviour management actively encourages acceptable behaviour. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected. They said that they knew what sanctions can be imposed and felt that they were 'ok'. However, one specific sanction about the period that friends are not allowed to visit the home after an incident is not sufficiently clear that this is a proportionate response.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is generally very thorough. All staff currently working at the home have had appropriate checks, including a Criminal Records Bureau check. These measures help ensure young people are only supported by staff who have been appropriately checked.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff see young people in a very positive light and are committed to helping them in achieving their goals. Staff ensure young people have good access to advice on

making decisions on future learning and career choices through positive relationships with the Connexions service. Access to further education and vocational courses the service is supporting the young people to learn useful skills that will enable them to negotiate their way in the wider employment world and to gain qualifications to enhance future career options. This has resulted in young people's achievements in education being recognised by placing authorities by gaining the 'No limits' award. Additionally very good work is undertaken to provide advice and guidance to assist young people in preparing for job interviews, which young people found 'really useful'.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to follow interests suitable to age, for example attending local rugby and football matches as well as regular car boot sales. This helps build confidence and social skills. There is also very good access to the local community with young people regularly enjoying socialising with friends.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Overall the home's records provide a good insight into the individual needs of young people with sound written placement plans in place to meet them. The placement plans are reviewed to make sure that they are up to date. This means there is a record maintained about young people's progress, experiences and achievements to date.

Young people confirm they are encouraged to make decisions about their lives through involvement in their reviews. However, the minutes of review meetings are not always provided in a timely way and are, therefore, not on young people's files. This means it is not clearly identified what role the home has in implementing actions that have arisen as a consequence of the review. Although there is informal discussion with staff, young people's meetings are not regularly held or alternatively the detail of significant discussion is not always evident in personal progress reports. This means that it is not sufficiently clear about how young people's views and those of their families and others significant to them are sought and how this is used to influence the way the home is run.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff who are described as being 'very helpful'. The home provides a friendly and supportive atmosphere where young people's friends and family can visit. Staff provide good emotional and practical support for young people, including facilitating contact to ensure young people have suitable and regular contact with key people in their lives. This helps to promote and maintain positive relationships. Staff enjoy spending time with young people, for example going shopping, but are mindful of maintaining clear professional and personal boundaries consistent with good child care practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home provides a good physical environment that meets the specific needs of the young people who live there. It is comfortable and there is an ongoing programme set out to maintain the standard of decoration and accommodation. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised bedrooms to reflect their interests and individual tastes.

The home has efficient systems to ensure effective safeguarding and management of young people's money and valuables, including record keeping. Young people are supported to manage their own money and to develop effective budgeting skills in preparation for moving onto more independent services.

Young people spoke about their plans for the future and were clear about some of their aspirations, such as seeking employment and where they wished to live so they can maintain friendships within the locality. They report that they 'feel included' by the service in decisions about their future. There are very good examples, such as supporting young people's preparation for job interviews and help with curriculum vitae as well as encouraging life skills, that demonstrate a commitment to supporting young people as they become more independent. However, young people do not currently have a formalised placing authority pathway plan in place that establishes what the future arrangements are for supporting them. The lack of appropriate pathway planning impacts upon the home's ability to support young people in developing the skills, knowledge and confidence they require in their transition into adulthood. Consequently the home's own planning processes do not sufficiently specify what support and assistance young people will receive.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a consistent commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. For example, the work undertaken to support young people to access education and to seek employment enhances young people's self-esteem and opportunities for success in the future. Staff are good at recognising young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They willingly address negative and potentially derogatory comments that are occasionally made by young people, offering appropriate explanation and guidance as to why comments may be offensive. Consequently staff work hard to ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs.

The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people. In addition, the home has a clearly written statement of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs, although the staffing details in the Statement of Purpose require some updating to

accurately identify staff training.

Staff have access to a good range of training, for example managing violence and aggression and safeguarding training, although the minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff qualified at National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or above has not yet been achieved.

There is a system in place for the supervision of staff and for undertaking team meetings. However, team meetings have not been undertaken on a monthly basis. Therefore, it is not sufficiently clear that staff are effectively supported through regular staff meetings that the Registered Manager consistently attends.

The rota demonstrates that over recent months there has been a more consistent core staff team offering a greater continuity of care. The system for the external monitoring the quality of care in the home has improved and is now more evaluative in terms of identifying any trends or patterns in the recordings and events. This level of monitoring helps to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people. However, the monitoring of key records by the Registered Manager is not sufficiently evidenced and neither is the action taken to attend to matters identified as a consequence of the Regulation 33 visits.

Overall record keeping is of a reasonable standard. Records are kept securely and staff are aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the importance of confidentiality. Young people can gain access to their records and are encouraged to contribute to them.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
3	ensure that records of reviews are maintained on young people's files and it is clearly identified what role the home has in implementing actions that have arisen as a consequence of the review (Regulation 28 Schedule 3)	29/01/2011
6	ensure young people have a pathway plan in place (Regulation 28 Schedule 3)	29/01/2011
33	ensure action is taken by the registered person to improve the quality of care by addressing matters identified in Regulation 33 reports in a timely manner. (Regulation 34)	29/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- review the approach to sanctions that involve young people not having friends to visit to ensure that this is not excessive (NMS 22)
- ensure that risk assessments contain sufficient detail of known or likely activities and that they include an assessment of the likelihood of the risk occurring (NMS 26.2)
- consider ways to more effectively evidence how young people's views and those of their families and others significant to them are sought (NMS 8)
- ensure the home's plan developed from the authorities pathway plan is sufficiently comprehensive and specifies the support and assistance young people will receive (NMS 6)
- ensure the Statement of Purpose is up to date specifically, when details refer to staff training ensure this information is accurate (NMS 1)
- ensure that team meetings are held in line with the frequency stated in the national minimum standards and that the Registered Manager is in regular attendance (28.10)
- ensure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)