

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025812
Inspection date	21 September 2009
Inspector	Caroline Wilson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17 March 2009
--------------------------------	---------------

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

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

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This service caters for young people between the ages of 15 and 18 who are in the process of preparing for independence. The service can cater for up to a maximum of four young people, each having their own bedrooms and sharing the other facilities of the house. The aim of the unit is to provide a resource that recognises the placement difficulties encountered by young looked-after-children close to school leaving age. The unit supports the young people in their development of age appropriate behaviour. The house is situated in a residential area and is close to good transport links and local amenities.

Summary

This unannounced inspection looked at key National Minimum Standards linked to the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Young people and staff were spoken to and relevant documentation was perused to inform this inspection report.

The outcomes for young people, in a number of key areas, are poor. Areas in which this service does well are ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected, and robust health and safety checks undertaken at suitable frequencies. Education is seen as valuable and all young people attend some form of day time activity.

The inspection noted that the poor outcomes were mostly due to a lack of communication between placing authorities and the service as well as between staff at the home. The services does not have all the necessary background information for young people in order for them to be able to make an accurate assessment of their needs. In addition, attendance at staff meetings is poor to ensure that they have the opportunity to discuss the management of the young people that they care for and other related matters. There is also a lack of designated time between the night and day shift for a handover period and vital information is not always passed on to senior staff. Also, training may be on offer for staff and documentation available for the recording of information, however, these are not implemented in a meaningful way in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people placed.

An area that is surprisingly remiss, given the remit of the home, is in the preparation and support of young people moving into independent living. There is no documentation or clear assessments available which specify the areas of support and assistance that young people need to receive to enable them to have a successful transition into adulthood.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

A recommendation was made at the last inspection that policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed and kept up to date. This has been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Young people's health needs are not fully met. Written documentation relating to young people's health need is either unavailable or scant and does not enable their health needs to be identified in order that services can be provided to meet and promote them.

Young people have the opportunity to plan and shop for their meals, either by themselves or supported by staff. Records relating to young people's diets do not enable staff to monitor whether young people are eating suitably and healthily. Current arrangements do not enable staff to monitor issues relating to eating disorders or to assess young people's understanding of eating a balanced and nutritional diet.

Outcomes relating to the safe handling of medication is mixed. Young people receive care in the event of a medical emergency, as at least one member of staff have a suitable first aid qualification. However, matters relating to the administration of medication are remiss and do not ensure that young people have been adequately assessed as competent to administer their medication independently. In addition, written records do not adequately reflect the necessary information to ensure that young people are provided medication as prescribed by their GPs. There is also an issue with regards to the consistency of medication forms as there are a number of versions available for staff use.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Arrangements for the managing of complaints are inadequate. Although forms are in place to record complaints, no facilities were available for the safekeeping of these. Young people with communication difficulties are not supported in formalising complaints about aspects of the running of the home that they are unhappy with.

Staff have received recent training in safeguarding, however, they are not always aware of their roles in identifying a safeguarding or bullying matter and their roles and powers relating to such incidences that take place away from the unit. Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and bullying have been updated and contain all the necessary information in line with relevant guidance.

Physical restraints are used to prevent likely injury to the young person concerned or to others or likely serious damage to property. Records relating to this are inconsistent as one was recorded in the designated restraints book, whilst another has not. Therefore, information to monitor the effectiveness and any consequences of the restraints was not available in all cases.

Young people are aware of the behaviours expected of them and the sanctions in place as a consequence of any rule breaking. Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. The health and safety inspections perused were undertaken within relevant timescales. There is careful vetting of visitors to the home, who are required to sign the visitors book upon entry and when leaving the premises. Young people's privacy is respected by staff. Suitable arrangements are in place for entering young people's bedrooms and for them to make private and personal calls. Young people who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and provided with the opportunity to state any reasons for their absence on their return.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Arrangements to ensure that young people receive individualised support when they need it is poor. Although they have set key-workers, key work sessions are held irregularly, therefore young people are not provided regular guidance and support when needed.

All young people placed are involved in some form of educational placement and they are self sufficient and motivated to attend these. Staff provide support in helping young people enrol in these programmes and in attending any events that are normally attended by those with parental responsibility. However, information regarding young people's school placements are not always kept up to date or recorded in the relevant sections of their files.

Young people are encouraged to pursue leisure activities that are of interest to them on an individual basis.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have care plans in place in which there is the opportunity to set out how their assessed needs will be met on a day to day basis. However, it is difficult for the home to translate this information into practice as some of this information is not documented in the LAC forms. In addition, young people's reviews are not held within statutory time-scales; however, there is evidence that the home contacts placing authorities to request a statutory reviews when one has not been arranged. Young people are encouraged to maintain constructive contact with people who play a significant role in their lives, although any restrictions on contact are not always recorded clearly. Resident's meetings are set to occur on a weekly basis so that young people can be consulted about decisions that may affect their every day lives, in practice these do not occur as attendance is poor.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

The planning for the preparation of young people leaving care is poor. Placing authorities do not provide pathway plans which sets out the scope of work in which they expect the home to undertake to enable young people to have a successful transition into adulthood. The home has its own documentation in which assessment of young people's areas of strength and those in which they require support can be recorded. However, this piece of work is not undertaken with young people, even though some of the areas to be considered can be completed through the observation of young people, for instance, how they store their dirty linen or manage their personal hygiene.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. The home does not have sufficient information about young people, their background and wishes and feelings, to ensure they are meeting their individual needs.

Communication within the organisation is poor. Time is not allocated between the night and morning shifts for the handing over of information. Team meetings are held irregularly and staff attendance when they do occur is poor. Therefore, there is a lack of opportunity for the staff to get together as a team to discuss the home's work in the management of the current group of young people or to review the home's practices.

Information regarding the frequency of supervision was unavailable during the inspection, so it is difficult to ascertain whether staff are themselves guided in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people in their care. However, all staff have either completed, are in the process of completing or imminently in the process of undertaking their NVQ qualification.

Regulation 33 visits are undertaken within relevant time-scales, however, the information provided in these are scant and not always an accurate reflection of the service to enable the home to assess how they are performing against its Statement of Purpose.

Not all young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Not all files contain the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Some of this is due to placing authorities not providing the home with this information, despite requests, with others, it is due to this information being kept in places other than the young person's file.

Young people are guided through and know what services to expect from the home. The young person's guide is written in a format that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people at the home. The statement of purpose describes what the home sets out to do for the young people that it accommodates.

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
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any restraint a written record is kept (17 (4))	31 October 2009
16	ensure that a written record is kept of any complaint and the action taken to resolve it (Reg 24 (5))	31 October 2009
7	ensure that proper provision is made for the supervision of young people placed (reg 11 (1) (b))	30 November 2009
14	ensure that the records set out in Schedule 3 are kept up to date (Reg 28 (1))	28 February 2010
16	ensure that the home has due regard to the linguistic background of young people (Reg 11 (b))	30 October 2009
13	ensure that suitable arrangements are made for the recording and safe handling of medication (Reg 21 (1))	30 November 2009
12	ensure that medication can be safely administered by young people (Reg 21 (3) (b))	30 November 2009
17	ensure that staff receive appropriate training and supervision in relation to safeguarding (27 (4) (a))	31 March 2010

6	ensure that young people are provided with the necessary support to prepare them for adulthood (Reg 11 (1) (b))	30 November 2009
29	ensure that the home promotes the welfare of young people accommodated there by ensuring that shift patterns incorporate allocated time for handover sessions (Reg 11 (1) (a))	28 February 2010
33	ensure handovers are undertaken in order to inform and improve the practice at the home. (Reg 33 (b) (c))	30 November 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records are kept of actual meals eaten (Standard 10)
- make arrangements to ensure the participation of young people at resident's meetings (Standard 8)
- ensure that all information pertaining to young people is kept in their main and working files. (Standard 35)