

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC028460
Inspection date	30 November 2009
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 May 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 children's home is privately owned. It is a family business with a number of family members working in it. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people of either gender, between the ages of 11 and 17.

The home is a two storey house. Each young person has their own bedroom. There is a small garden with a patio at the rear. There is easy access to local transport, shopping, leisure and education facilities.

At the time of the inspection, four young people were placed in the home. Two young people took part in the inspection.

Summary

This unannounced full inspection looked at all the key standards plus those standards relating to pocket money and leisure activities.

The home continues to provide a satisfactory service. There is a family atmosphere where some staff show a strong commitment to young people's needs. Staff skills in behaviour management, food handling and first aid have been extended through training. The staff work well with school staff and other professionals for the benefit of young people. The health needs of young people are managed well. Some improvements have been made to the premises.

Two actions and two recommendation were made at the last inspection; one action is met but one is not met and is repeated in this report. Both recommendations are met.

As a result of this inspection, four actions and six recommendations are made. The actions are around the premises, children's records, information on the home, meals and staff recruitment. The recommendations are around food and meals, consultation with young people, records, activities and fire drills.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the home was asked to ensure young people have an opportunity to meet with the Regulation 33 visitor; this now takes place.

The manager was asked to provide evidence that they had tried to obtain the necessary information for young people's files. The home reports some difficulties acquiring information from placing authorities, but does not always evidence their efforts to obtain such information. The action is repeated in this report.

The home was asked to ensure staff are trained in managing challenging behaviour and restraint. This has been provided.

Fines are no longer used as a sanction for young people's misbehaviour and those sanctions used are now appropriate.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's health needs are fully supported and promoted. Staff ensure young people have access to general and specialist health services where required. Staff encourage young people to attend appointments, even when young people refuse to attend. Staff carefully record young people's health needs to ensure a clear record is available for them.

The procedures for storing, recording and administering medication are sound. Recent training for staff ensures someone trained to administer first aid is always available to deal with minor injuries. However, consent for medication and the administration of first aid, from someone with responsibility, is not always obtained.

All staff are trained in food handling and hygiene to promote the safety of young people. The provision of food and regularity of meals is variable. Although staff shop weekly and top up groceries, the supply of food is inconsistent and there are not always sufficient basic foodstuffs in the home.

Although young people are able to help themselves to snacks, such as fresh fruit, they are not always sufficiently encouraged to take regular meals. Young people very much enjoy some of the home cooked meals prepared by staff, but menus do not consistently reflect their cultural and ethnic needs and do not show a sufficiently varied diet. Staff sometimes eat with young people at a table, but mealtimes are not always set up to be social occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The staff are appropriately trained and there are systems in place to respond appropriately to any complaints, bullying or issues to do with child protection. Levels of complaints are low. Young people are encouraged to raise any concerns with staff and are provided with details of other organisations they may approach. Staff take seriously any allegation of bullying and ensure this is not tolerated in the home.

Staff have attended recent training in managing challenging behaviour to help them work positively with young people. Sanctions are rarely used, but these are suitable and fair. When young people go absent without permission, staff follow clear guidelines to ensure that the appropriate people are informed and try to bring about their safe return to the home.

The privacy of young people is respected when they are in their rooms or using bathrooms. Information about them is treated confidentially. Although the telephone is in a public area, young people may use the office phone in private if they wish.

Positive steps are taken to provide physical safety and security through regular checks and tests of equipment and systems within the building. Regular fire drills are carried out, but these do not always include all young people living in the home. One fire door is not closed which may compromise fire safety.

Most of the required recruitment checks are carried out. However, gaps in recruitment checks mean a thorough process is not evidenced to ensure suitable staff are recruited.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Education is given a high profile. Young people are encouraged to attend when they have an educational placement. Facilities are provided to support education, such as a place to study and a computer. Effective links are made with schools, and others in the community, to support young people's learning and interests. Staff liaise with school staff to ensure clear communication between the school and home.

All young people are allocated a key worker to provide them with individualised support, although some would prefer to have a say in the choice of key worker. Staff make sure that all young people have someone independent whom they may contact directly about any personal problems or concerns at the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are procedures to introduce young people to the home and staff, to help make the process clear. Residents are fully supported to keep in touch with family and friends where this is appropriate. Contact arrangements are included in care plans which outline how the staff will meet individual's needs.

Young people's views are sought at reviews of their placements to ensure they are listened to and considered. Staff also ask young people for their views on everyday matters, such as during key work sessions. However, some means of consultation, such as residents' meetings, are not successful in eliciting the views of young people due to the lack of an agenda and careful questioning to find out what young people think.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff support young people to learn useful skills to help them be independent, such as shopping and doing laundry. Young people receive pocket money and allowances but records are not always signed to evidence this.

A limited range of books are available in the home, with some magazines, but newspapers are not provided. Young people are encouraged to pursue their own interests and hobbies. Most young people organise their own leisure time. A few activities are organised on their behalf by staff, such as an annual holiday. Some stakeholders feel further activities organised by staff would be beneficial to young people.

Some improvements have been made to the premises, such as decoration to the kitchen and the purchase of new mirrors. The home plans redecoration in the near future as parts of the building show wear and tear. Whilst most areas are comfortable and homely, a few areas are institutional in appearance and there is insufficient storage. Some areas are not sufficiently clean to maintain a hygienic environment.

Young people have their own rooms and sufficient storage, although they do not have lockable storage for their valuables and some rooms lack homely touches, such as light shades.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has reviewed the written information about the service it provides. However, the language in the children's guide is insufficiently clear in places to ensure young people reading it know what to expect from the service. However, staff do make sure they explain the content to young people who are moving into the home. Regular monitoring is carried out to develop the quality of the service.

Sufficient staffing ensures young people have enough adults to look after them, both day and night. There are staff of both genders and the staff team reflect the backgrounds of young people. New staff receive a thorough induction to prepare them for their role.

Some staff are working towards National Vocational Qualifications, although the minimum ratio of 80% has not yet been achieved due to difficulties outside the control of the home. Ongoing training, such as in child protection and food hygiene, ensures the staff team are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of young people.

Each young person has a private record with a chronology of their time spent in the home. Staff report difficulties obtaining all the required information from placing authorities, such as personal education plans. However, the home does not always evidence that they have tried to obtain such information.

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
1	ensure the language used in the children's guide is clear for young people to read and understand (Regulations 4,5)	31 January 2010
24	ensure the home is kept clean, reasonably decorated and maintained, suitably furnished and equipped with appropriate storage facilities (Regulation 31)	31 January 2010
26	make sure all fire doors are kept closed (Regulation 23)	31 December 2009
27	evidence a full employment history, together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Schedule 2 Regulations 6,7,26)	31 January 2010
35	evidence that the home has tried to obtain the necessary information for young people's files, as listed in Schedule 3 (Regulation 28 1 a) (previous deadline 19/06/2009)	31 January 2010

Recommendations

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

- obtain consent from those with parental responsibility for the administration of medication, first aid and emergency medical treatment (Standard 13)
- ensure a record of menus (as served) show food is provided in adequate quantities and that young people are encouraged to eat regular meals and a varied, healthy diet which reflects their cultural needs. Ensure meals are set-up to be well-managed, social occasions (Standard 10)
- consider involving new residents in a fire drill as soon as soon after moving into the home as possible(Standard 26)
- review the system for ascertaining young people's views on all matters affecting them to ensure it meets their needs, such as including an agenda and clear questions (Standard 8)
- encourage young people to sign records of their allowances (Standard 11)
- provide lockable or otherwise safe storage for personal possessions and a homely environment (Standard 24)
- make sure young people have access to, and a choice in, newspapers, books and magazines. Ensure they are encouraged to meet staff regularly, individually or in groups to discuss the general running of the home, to plan activities and so on. Trips out to events for enjoyment or interest are organised by staff (Standard 15)