

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC043255
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Inspector	Mick Walklin
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	18 December 2008
--------------------------------	------------------

© 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

The home is managed and run by the local authority. It provides residential care for six young people aged between 10 and under 18. The aim of the home is to provide physical, emotional and psychological support for young people so that they may return to their birth family, move to foster care, or develop skills to live independently in the community. The home is a large, refurbished detached house, providing spacious communal facilities. Private garden areas are situated to the front and rear of the property. Ground floor accommodation comprises of two lounges, a dining room, a kitchen, and a games room. The office is situated across a courtyard in a separate building. On the first floor there are six single bedrooms and two bathrooms. Local facilities in the town centre are accessible including shops, parks and clubs. Three young people were present during the inspection.

Summary

At this announced full inspection, all key standards were inspected.

This is a good service in most respects. Young people receive good individual support through an effective key worker system. Their safety and welfare is protected through good procedures and staff awareness. Staff are proactive in engaging young people in 'keep safe' work. However, some fire checks and audits by the manager are not occurring as frequently as recommended. Staff receive training to equip them to deal with challenging behaviours and young people say that the rules are generally fair. However, physical intervention records do not always record the duration of interventions. Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. They are encouraged to eat a healthy diet, their health and welfare is promoted by means of good access to local health services, including specialist services to support young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Staff involve young people in decision making by means of regular formal and informal meetings. However, informal meetings are not recorded. Contact with family and friends is supported. Young people are supported to gain independence skills in preparation for adulthood. They benefit from living in a spacious, homely, well-maintained and decorated environment. Staff are well trained and supported and there is a strong commitment to staff attaining National Vocational Qualifications.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection identified that there was no record of a significant incident having been reported to Ofsted. All incidents since then have been reported to the appropriate authorities.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Meals are treated as social occasions and young people are encouraged to eat together. They are involved in shopping and menu planning to ensure that individual tastes are catered for. Comments include, 'We are involved in choosing the menu.', 'If it is something I don't like I get something else.', 'They encourage us to eat healthy and there is always salad out.', 'We can go into the kitchen at any

time for drinks and snacks although some things like crisps are locked away'. Staff encourage young people to experience meals from different cultures and there are regular discussions about the consequences of a poor diet. Young people complained that staff do not measure meat temperatures before serving. However, there is evidence that meat probe records have just been introduced.

Young people's health is promoted and services are provided to meet their health needs. Exercise is encouraged and gym membership is provided for young people. There are good arrangements with local health providers. Staff commented that relationships with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have improved with a CAMHS nurse attending staff meetings. However, although staff are trained to deal with young people's day-to-day emotional issues they say that accessing psychological support can take a long time. Links with the Teenage Pregnancy Service are valued and young people have access to drug and alcohol services if required. Smoking is discouraged with young people being supported to attend cessation sessions. Young people's welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medication. Storage facilities are secure and there are procedures in place for the administration of homely remedies with the appropriate consents in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and dignity is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Young people commented, 'Staff knock on our doors before they come in. We have our own keys and they treat our rooms as private'. However, staff explained that procedures are in place should room searches be required. Young people's confidential records are securely stored and their personal space is respected when making private phone calls.

Young people have confidence that complaints will be dealt with effectively. They are given packs containing complaints and compliment forms, pens and envelopes in order to record issues. They also have the opportunity to discuss complaints with a worker from the National Youth Advisory Service who visits on a monthly basis. No complaints have been received since the last inspection.

Young people's welfare is protected by good policies, procedures and staff training. Staff are proactive in engaging young people in 'keeping safe' work and there is a good relationship with local Police Community Support Officers. Young people confirm that there is no bullying, 'but we fall out sometimes'. Issues would be dealt with through individual work, incentive schemes and police involvement as necessary. Staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training. Procedures are in place to deal with unauthorised absences according to young people's vulnerability and risk factors. Young people have good risk assessments and risk management plans including protocols for dealing with self-harm. The previous inspection identified that there was no record of a significant incident having been reported to Ofsted. All incidents since then have been reported to the appropriate authorities.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff are skilled at dealing with challenging behaviours and receive accredited training. Each young person has an 'Individual Crisis Management Plan' which provides good guidance for staff. There is relatively little use of sanctions or physical interventions and those used appear justified. Young people feel that the rules are generally fair but complained that bedtimes are too early. There is also a perception amongst young people that staff use 'fines' as a sanction, although records demonstrate that

this is reparation for damage to property. Although incident records are of a good quality the duration of physical interventions is not always recorded.

Young people are protected by good health and safety procedures. Regular fire checks are conducted by staff. However, there has been some confusion about which forms should be completed and there are some gaps in weekly fire checks. Young people are fully aware of the fire procedure and participate in fire drills. Other servicing documentation is not held at the home and was not available for inspection. No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection but previous inspections have demonstrated that there are robust procedures in place to ensure that staff are thoroughly checked. Visitors to the home are vetted to ensure the safety of young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good levels of individual support. Each young person has a key worker and staff work to ensure that young people are not socially isolated from the group. Staff endeavour to build positive relationships with young people to promote an ethos of equality within the group. They ensure that young people receive the nurturing required for them to reach their full potential. Young people say that they are satisfied with the individual support. Comments included, 'Some of the staff are good at providing support; others are not'. Placement plans identify any religious, ethnic or cultural needs. Specialist support is sought for any specific problems or issues that young people have.

The education of young people is actively promoted. Non attendance at school is identified as a barrier to young people's development. Key workers have close contact with those schools that young people attend to ensure effective communication about attendance and disciplinary issues. Those young people not in mainstream education are supported through residential staff liaising with external agencies to ensure that creative education packages are available. This may include 'virtual school', home tuition and entry to employment schemes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed effectively. They have care plans in the form of statutory documentation prepared by placing social workers. Whilst this documentation identifies young people's needs, it does not present information in a concise format, such as quick reference profiles. Young people are supported to prepare for their reviews. They are helped by their social worker and key worker by completing pre-review questionnaires and discussing what outcomes they want from the review. Young people are encouraged to attend their reviews, but staff will represent them if they do not wish to attend.

Young people are assisted to maintain contact with families and friends. They have unsupervised time in the community to maintain social networks and are fully supported in this. Friends are welcome to visit the home as long as this is safe and not in conflict with other young people's wishes. Staff will facilitate contact with young people's families by providing transport and escorts where required. Young people have access to a payphone and are provided with individual phone cards. Calls can be made in private and most young people also have their own mobile phones.

Young people are introduced to the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Staff endeavour to make the procedure as smooth as possible with young people being introduced to the home at a pace that suits them. Emergency admissions are accepted under certain circumstances.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lifestyles. Young people's meetings are meant to be held on a monthly basis. However, young people do not respond well to formal consultation and these meetings are not being held as planned. There is good informal consultation, for example, through group discussions around the meal table, but the manager acknowledges that this contact should be better recorded. Young people have confidence that staff will listen to their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps them prepare for adulthood. Young people are allocated a worker from Barnardos prior to their 16th birthday to support and guide them into independent living. A worker from Connexions also liaises with the key worker to explore work and further education opportunities. Staff support young people to gain skills in finances and budgeting and they are encouraged to contribute to household tasks. Staff are proud of their record in supporting previous residents to leave care.

Young people enjoy spacious accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a very high standard. Young people confirm that they have chosen the décor of their bedrooms. There is ample communal space for the number of young people accommodated. Staff have separate sleep-in facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care planning takes in ethnic, cultural and religious needs into consideration. Young people are supported to attend places of worship if they wish. Staff are quick to challenge the stigmatisation of young people in care by the general public and authorities. Young people are supported and encouraged to be part of their local community. The diversity of the staff team's interests, values, experience and culture support young people to express themselves as individuals.

The Statement of Purpose is generic to all the local authority's children's homes and provides basic general information about the services and facilities available. An appendix provides more specific information about the staff group. The young person's guide is also generic and contains only basic information.

Low staff turnover has ensured that an experienced staff group provides continuity of care. Staffing levels are satisfactory to meet the needs of young people. High levels of sickness were identified in pre-inspection material and a bank of committed relief workers has provided cover. Staff are well trained and supported. New staff receive a comprehensive induction to prepare them for their role. There is a strong commitment to staff gaining relevant qualifications with most staff having completed a National Vocational Qualification. There is a comprehensive training programme to ensure that staff receive regular training updates. There are clear management arrangements with an assistant manager deputising in the manager's absence and shift leaders identified on rotas. There is adequate handover time to ensure effective

communication between shifts. Procedures are in place for the manager to monitor the operation of the home although audits are not occurring as frequently as recommended. Young people have permanent records of their history and progress which are securely stored.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the duration of all physical interventions is recorded (NMS 22)
- ensure weekly fire checks are conducted (NMS 26)
- ensure that the significant views, discussions and expressed opinions are recorded promptly (NMS 8)
- ensure that the manager monitors the operation of the home on a monthly basis (NMS 34).