

Inspection report for children's home

---

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC063814      |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 10 March 2010 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Helen Walker  |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key           |

---

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 29 April 2009 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2010

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 is a children's home owned by a registered charity, which owns a number of children's homes across the county, together with a residential family centre. In addition, the organisation offers day and respite residential care to children with learning difficulties or physical disabilities.

The home provides accommodation for four children of either gender, aged from eight years to 17 years. The house is a six bedroom, two-storey building situated in a medium sized town. Ground floor accommodation consists of an office, dining room, kitchen, two lounges, and a toilet. First floor accommodation comprises of six bedrooms and a bathroom. There is an enclosed garden and a separate office to the side of the house.

The home is within walking distance of shops and public transport to the nearby town centre. There is a wide range of recreational opportunities within the immediate community and surrounding areas.

The home has a service level agreement with the local authority children's services who purchase all the beds in the home for an annual fee.

There are four young people resident in the home. Two of the young people talked to the inspector.

### Summary

At this full, unannounced inspection, the key national minimum standards in the all outcome areas are considered.

The home is effectively managed and young people benefit from being looked after by staff with a good understanding of their needs and how to meet these. Some young people have lived here for a number of years which evidences stability and continuity of their placement. This is achieved through the support and help of staff.

Staff have a good understanding about keeping young people safe from harm and they know how to respond, in the event of any allegation or serious concern about a young person's safety. Young people are encouraged to develop appropriate and acceptable behaviours and to take responsibility for their actions. Staff give consistent care with firm but fair boundaries.

Young people's health needs are well promoted. Education is seen as an important part of young people's life. Staff are keen to help young people make suitable choices in relation to further education and employment. Staff recognise young people as individuals and support them to achieve their ambitions. This is clearly seen with the assistance given to young people who wish to follow a work and career path. Although young people are encouraged to learn skills for independence, more formal leaving care plans are not in place.

The home is comfortably furnished and provides homely accommodation for young people but some of the decorations and carpets are damaged and worn. However, there is a current programme of refurbishment for the home.

Two actions and two recommendations have been made to further promote the wellbeing of the young people. These relate to refurbishing the home, formal leaving care plans, placement plans and the qualifications of staff.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

There are no previous actions or recommendations for improvement.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals in the home. Staff encourage young people to plan, shop and prepare meals which helps them learn useful independence skills. Staff understand the importance for young people to have a good choice of well-balanced meals so that they have a varied and healthy diet. Snacks such as fresh fruit are plentiful and readily available to the young people. A newly refurbished kitchen provides a modern, clean and spacious area to store, prepare and cook food in the home.

Young people's health needs are well promoted. Young people are registered with the usual primary health care services so that their routine health needs are met. Health care plans are informative and help to ensure staff provide good support to young people, for example, to attend medical appointments. There are times when young people fail to keep appointments such as those with the dentist. However, staff see the importance of the visits and continue to encourage young people to attend.

Health information is available in the home and contact with health professionals and agencies provides young people with good advice and guidance to promote their well-being. This includes information about sexual health and smoking cessation to increase young people's knowledge and understanding in these areas. Young people say staff regularly discourage them from smoking. Staff also promote activities such as cycling and using the gym so young people gain the physical health benefits associated with these sports.

Staff follow procedures for administering and storing medicines in the home. Medication is securely stored and records are monitored to confirm appropriate practices are in place. Additionally, staff are knowledgeable about the specific guidance in relation to any prescribed controlled drug held in the home. This helps to ensure medication is handled and administered properly. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed.

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

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is well respected in the home. They have individual bedrooms and a key to their bedroom door. This provides young people with their own personal space. A phone is available in the home and can be used to make calls in private without reference to staff.

The complaints procedure is known to the young people and the ethos of the home allows them the opportunity to raise any issues they are unhappy with. Young people feel staff listen

to them and the weekly house community meetings provide them with a forum to have their say. Young people also have regular contact with people they can talk to who are independent of the home. For example, health and education professionals.

Staff have a very good understanding about keeping young people safe from harm and they know how to respond in the event of any allegation or serious concern about a young person's safety. Staff receive training and are familiar with safeguarding guidance, which assists them to care for and to promote the welfare of young people.

Staff ensure young people are aware that bullying is not tolerated in the home. There are times when disagreements occur between the young people although they say there is no bullying at present. Staff take any bullying incidence seriously and use a restorative justice approach, involving the victim and perpetrator in resolving the issues.

Good procedures are in place should young people go missing. Staff follow these and record unauthorised absences fully, with details of the action taken, in a designated book. Young people said, 'don't see the point in going missing'.

There is a strong emphasis for young people to develop appropriate and acceptable behaviours. Staff encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions by providing consistent care and firm boundaries. Young people have different views on the fairness in the home; however, care is in line with their placement plans. Staff receive support and training to assist them to deal properly with challenging behaviour. Staff talk positively about their work with the young people. Records show no physical interventions and few sanctions have occurred since the last inspection.

The home environment is well-maintained and systems are in place to ensure health and safety checks are carried out. In addition, thorough recruitment and employment procedures help to confirm staff are suitable to work with young people.

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

The provision is good.

Young people have very good levels of personal support from staff and have the choice of a designated link worker. More specialist support from health and education professionals is available, including the child and adolescent mental health service. Some young people said they attend the 'in care council' meetings which are held independently of the home. Young people said the meetings are really enjoyable with different people to talk to.

Opportunities and equipment enable young people to participate in a range of activities, for example, cinema visits, the use of board games and using the fitness computer in the home. Staff encourage young people to maintain hobbies and interests of their choice such as playing chess and learning to play the guitar.

Education is seen as a significant part of young people's lives and is well-promoted by staff. Good dialogue exists with educational professionals to enable young people to make suitable choices in relation to further education and employment. For some young people employment is a preferred option rather than continuing their education. Staff recognise young people as individuals and support them to achieve their ambitions. This is clearly seen by the commitment of staff to assist young people who wish to follow a work and career path.

Documents such as young people's personal education plans are held in the home. These outline educational achievements and inform staff of young people's educational needs so that they are aware of how these are to be met.

Staff further promote educational opportunities by good use of equipment and facilities in the home. These include books, computer games and access to a computer, board games and quiet areas in the house.

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

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed effectively prior to admission to the home which means good consideration is given to the appropriateness of the placement. A wide range of information is held on the home's placement plans and 24 hour management plans to enable staff to provide suitable care to the young people. However, staff do not always note changes on the plans in respect of the use of different care management strategies. This means there is a lack of information to enable staff to consider and assess the effectiveness of the placement.

The home has well-established systems to review young people's local authority statutory care plans. Link workers take an active role and encourage young people to attend their statutory review meetings. Young people's files are updated accordingly from the meetings, to show any changes to future plans and the action staff need to take.

Young people are enabled to make choices about contact with family and friends, in line with their care and placement plans. Staff actively promote contact so that young people continue to have positive links with those that are important to them outside of the home. Practical support is given for contact to take place, such as the provision of transport. Young people talk enthusiastically about their friends and family visiting the home. Following consultation with young people, they are able to have friends stay for sleepovers.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned way. Careful consideration is given to match any prospective admission with the current established resident group. Long-term placements provide young people with a good level of stability. With the exception of one recent admission, the current resident young people have lived here for over two years. Prior to admission the young people say they have visits and an overnight stay which enables them to meet staff and other young people and so make an informed choice about moving in.

Young people are asked their opinions about issues that affect their daily life and future. This includes obtaining their views about aspects of the running of the home. For example, through weekly community house meetings, choices of decoration for their bedrooms, menus and activities. Young people said they are pleased with their bedroom decorations. This level of consultation helps to improve young people's quality of life.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive good support and care from staff who teach them practical skills such as, managing their laundry, making meals and cleaning. This ensures they are knowledgeable about carrying out these tasks. Staff take account of young people's age and ability to ensure

they feel able to participate in the home's independence programme. Young people said they are good at looking after themselves.

As part of preparing for independence the young people have good support about health matters. Staff help young people to understand the advantage of good health and to arrange and maintain contact with health professionals. Staff promote and really encourage young people to continue education, training and to benefit from employment.

However, there are no formal leaving care plans in place for young people who are over the age of 16 years. Although the manager has made a request to the placing authority for the plans, these have yet to be received. Without leaving care plans there is nothing explicit to show how the young people will be adequately prepared for leaving care and independence.

The home is a comfortably furnished domestic house. A grassed garden and a patio area to the rear of the house provide an enclosed and pleasant outside area. At this time there are some carpets and decorations in the home that are in poor condition. A programme of refurbishment is currently taking place. The plan is to replace carpets, wardrobes and improve decoration in communal areas. However, this work is yet to take place and some physical aspects of the home are poor, resulting in an action from this inspection.

Young people have their own bedrooms and the option to personalise them, which reflects their individuality. Young people are pleased with their choice of decoration in their bedroom. Communal and private areas in the home allow young people the opportunity to spend time with others or by themselves.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects what the home offers and the care provided. The young people's welcome brochure provides useful information about services and facilities for young people, families and placing authorities.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff group provide positive role models to young people in relation to values and attitudes in life. Young people are treated as individuals and their assessed needs are well considered. Young people and staff are members of a local education and action for development group. The group offers young people and staff information on a diverse range of subjects and includes migration and cultural changes in the area. Staff improve the life chances of young people, particularly through the promotion of education, health and support in employment.

Staff are sufficient in number to meet the needs of young people. Since the last inspection, five new staff have been employed at the home. An experienced core group of staff have worked in the home for a number of years which helps to provide continuity of care to the young people. The provider employs 'bank' staff who are used at times when permanent staff are unavailable, usually because of holidays or sickness. To support the Registered Manager and cover in her absence, the home has an experienced deputy manager in post.

Staff receive training to enable them to carry out their role effectively. To increase staff competency and skills, further training is provided, for example, equality and diversity and

drugs awareness. Not all staff have a relevant childcare qualification. However, an ongoing programme of training is in place for the recommended 80% of staff to achieve this qualification.

The home is well managed and offers a good level of stability to young people. Some young people have lived here for a number of years, made friends and obtained employment in the area. This has been with the help and support of staff.

Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose. They include the manager monitoring the necessary records and monthly visits to the home by an independent person. These systems give the manager an overview of how the home is running and help to ensure good standards of care are maintained.

Young people's progress is appropriately and permanently documented. Records are securely stored and contain good evidence of their history and development.

## **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.

| <b>Standard</b> | <b>Action</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Due date</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 6               | draw up a plan for each young person who is beyond school leaving age, to support them towards adulthood. This plan should be consistent with the placing authority's Pathway Plan (Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000) | 13 May 2010     |
| 24              | ensure all parts of the children's home are suitably furnished, reasonably decorated and maintained. (Regulation 31.2)                                                                                                | 22 June 2010    |

### **Recommendations**

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

- ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have the appropriate NVQ at Level 3 care award or equivalent qualification (NMS 29.5)
- ensure placement plans demonstrate the effectiveness of the placement. (NMS 2.1)