

Inspection report for children's home

---

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC063997       |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 5 October 2009 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Warren Clarke  |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Random         |

---

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 1 June 2009 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2009

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 children's home provides accommodation for three young people aged from 10 years to under 18. The home is located on the outskirts of two local towns. There is reasonable access to local services and bus routes into the main shopping areas. The home is a detached house offering individual bedrooms and two bathrooms for young people on the first floor where the staff sleeping-in accommodation and the therapy room are also located. On the ground floor there is: a lounge and a well-equipped kitchen; laundry; a classroom, the general office. There is a large mature and well-maintained garden at the rear of the building.

At the time of inspection there were three young people, average age 14 years, accommodated. All of them were seen and they all contributed to the inspection to a greater or lesser extent.

### Summary

This unannounced random inspection assessed the home's performance against all the key National Minimum Standards as set out under the Every Child Matters national outcome framework: staying safe and organisation. The young people are provided with a satisfactory quality of care. There is however capacity to achieve a higher judgement. Whilst there are some basic strengths in the approach to the care of the young people, lack of continuous good management and leadership, too frequent staff changes and appointment of insufficiently qualified and experienced staff combine to arrest the proper development of the home. This causes the home to fall short of high quality of provision to cater for 'medium to long term structured and therapeutic residential care service for young people with complex needs', as set out in the Statement of Purpose.

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 registered person was required to review the behaviour management policy with a view to addressing some young people's experience of pain during physical restraint. A requirement was also made for those employed to look after the young people, to have the qualifications, skills and experience for their duties. Since then staff have been provided with specific behaviour management training and consultation with a senior tutor in strategies and use of techniques for control and discipline of the young people, including safe physical restraint. Where it has been necessary for young people to be restrained, they are made aware that they can request to be examined by a nurse or a doctor and they are encouraged to discuss the event and have their comments recorded. None of the young people expressed any concerns on this occasion about staff's approach to control and discipline. These requirements and two recommendations made along similar lines have therefore been satisfactorily met.

It remains the case that significantly less than 80 per cent of the care staff hold the basic qualification for their jobs. However, in response to a recommendation, the registered person has sponsored six care staff members to undertake the training and the accreditation process to become so qualified. This recommendation is therefore only partly met.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

All the young people accommodated in the home enjoy an acceptable degree of privacy relevant to their age and circumstances. The home makes proper provisions in this regard by providing each young person with his or her own bedroom which they are able to lock and to keep their personal possessions private and safe. Communal facilities such as bathrooms and toilets are also properly equipped to enable the young people to use them in private and without fear of embarrassment. Although some young people's circumstances dictate that they are closely supervised, this is carried out discreetly so that their privacy and dignity are not compromised. There are well established staff codes of practice which ensure that young people's personal details are kept confidential and accessible to only those who are authorised. Where staff have cause to search a young person's bedroom to recover contraband or items which they may use to cause harm, this is done sensitively and within strict procedures.

In cases where young people and others have concerns about the home's quality of service, the home provides them with access to a clear complaints procedure, which complies with all the NMS requirements and current good practice. This procedure is actively and appropriately promoted to young people who use it to good effect. For example, complaints that the young people make are taken seriously, are fairly considered and provide outcomes with which the complainants are satisfied. This aspect of the running of the home is regularly and rigorously monitored by the persons responsible for the home.

A comprehensive and well-established child protection policy is successfully applied and effective in safeguarding of children and young people from abuse. Staff have completed the basic training necessary to enable them to identify abuse, contribute to preventing it and to be able to respond appropriately to allegations. Staff have available to them the child protection procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and an awareness of protocols as relevant to young people placed by local authorities other than one in whose area the home is located. Whilst staff work most effectively with the local safeguarding children service and other agencies to protect the young people, much of this is reactive. The home accommodates relatively few young people, but there are some 14 child protection events arising from risky behaviour and other matters during the last 14 months. This high number of events which may be attributed to the profile of young people who enter the home, nevertheless suggests that a review and emphasis on prevention is indicated.

The home makes sound provisions to promote anti-bullying and ensure that bullying behaviour and the impact on young people are properly addressed. This is driven by a comprehensive policy and staff guidance which equip staff and young people to recognise bullying, take steps to prevent it and to respond appropriately and effectively when it occurs. Young people who comment on this observe that there is no bullying amongst them and that they all get on quite well. There continues, however, to be concern about some young people attempting to bully staff.

An effective procedure is in place which staff productively invoke on the few occasions when a child or young person absconds or is absent from the home without permission. The procedure

is in line with the local joint police and local authority missing from care protocol, which takes account of the child's or young person's vulnerability and the particular circumstances of their absence. Staff properly recognise the risk at which some young people place themselves or others when they abscond and proceed competently and successfully to recover them. Young people who comment say that the home is a good place to live and that young people who occasionally absent themselves do so for reasons other than because they are dissatisfied or unhappy.

The home's comprehensive behaviour management policy provides staff with a sound framework in which to operate in their management of the young people's behaviour. This provides safeguards for the children and young people from unfair treatment and unacceptable punishment. The emphasis is on encouragement of good behaviour and therefore staff are given clear instructions on punishment or sanctions, which are not permissible. In practice, each young person has a behaviour management plan, which identifies their specific behavioural difficulties and the agreed approach staff must take in dealing with them. This approach is successful for some young people who respond positively to rewards for achieving personal goals including modifying their unacceptable conduct. However, in other cases, there is no improvement in acceptable behaviour and some behaviour occasionally necessitates physical restraint and involvement of the police. Considered alongside some young people's particularly challenging behaviour, improvements in setting and maintaining safe and consistent boundaries are necessary. Records of sanctions are not being maintained in the manner specified in the National Minimum Standards. The sanctions book is not properly bound causing some of the pages to come adrift and be out of sequence and therefore unreliable. This book which is required to be used exclusively for its purpose is used to record related but separate matters.

Safety and security of the children and young people are given a high priority. This is reflected in the wide range of sound health and safety measures that staff take. For example, the home's environment and the various activities involved in the young people's care have been risk-assessed and, where necessary, control measures established to remove or reduce hazards. Young people's safety is also promoted and safeguarded by a raft of fire precautions and measures that effectively protect them from intruders. However, fire alarm tests which are required to be carried out weekly were not conducted during the period 13/07/2009 and 02/10/2009. It is necessary for such tests to be carried out weekly to ensure that the alarm remains in operationally sound order to warn of any outbreak of fire.

The Persons in charge of the home take all the necessary precautions against employing staff who may be unsuitable to be involved in the care of children and young people. Prospective staff members are therefore subjected to a thorough selection and vetting process. They are not permitted to take up employment in the home until there is a satisfactory outcome to the rigorous vetting process. Staff members' professional conduct is constantly monitored and any cause for concern is carefully investigated.

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

The provision is not judged.

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

The provision is not judged.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home is being operated satisfactorily in accordance with its largely accurate and compliant written Statement of Purpose (SOP). It sets out the principles, aims, objectives and methods that inform the care of the young people and the running of the home. This document is also summarised in a clear, helpful and thoughtfully prepared children's guide. Between them these documents are likely to provide young people, parents and others a clear understanding of how the home is run and the care experience a child or young person can expect. The SOP is, in part, misleading in the claim that the home provides a '... therapeutic residential care service'. Whilst the young people have access to a visiting therapist, there is nothing more therapeutic about the home's environment or the approach to the care that it provides than other children's homes which are not therapeutic. For example less than 30 per cent of the care staff team members hold the basic qualifications for their jobs.

Sufficient numbers of staff are employed to look after the young people; meet their individual needs adequately and complete the administrative and other tasks involved in doing so. This is, however, achieved by using agency staff to a lesser extent and staff from other of the provider's children's homes more so. This is also against a background of an unacceptable turnover of those who are permanently employed to care for the young people. Only two of those currently employed have been so for two years or more. The home has operated without a registered manager for a year and the interim arrangements during that time have been disrupted by unforeseen factors. Alongside this, the failure to staff the home with those with the necessary basic qualifications creates circumstances of impermanence and discontinuity in the care of young people regarded as having complex needs. The registered person recognises these deficits and has begun to address them. For example, five staff members are currently working towards becoming appropriately qualified for their jobs and one of the directors of the company declares that a manager and deputy manager have been appointed and are due to take up their posts imminently.

Staff consider that they are supported to look after the young people well and this comes in the form of one-to-one supervision by the manager who was in post until recently and in-service staff training and development programmes that the home provides. Of particular benefit to the young people, is the home's success in establishing a diverse staff team in terms of its members' sex, racial origins and the range of leisure interests that they bring.

The registered provider has in place an established system that ensures continuous and rigorous monitoring of the home to ensure promotion and safeguarding of the young people's welfare. The home is visited monthly by the provider's representative who routinely consults the young people and staff and reports on the effectiveness of the care and the running of the home. For example, some improvement in staffing levels and decorative maintenance of the young people's accommodation has been influenced by this system.

Children's records are well organised in files that provide information about their individual circumstances, needs and progress. The records kept conform to that required by the relevant

regulations. There is an access to records policy and, should the young people opt to access their individual records, the way they are structured should enable this to happen easily.

## 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         |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 22       | ensure that staff meetings and the therapeutic input to the young people's care address issues of control and agree acceptable strategies for responding to behaviour and control problems of both the current group of young people and of any individual child or young person in light of their histories, current difficulties and placement plans (Regulation 17 (2) (b)) | 4 December 2009  |
| 29       | ensure that a minimum of 80 per cent of the care staff team members hold the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or its accredited equivalent (Regulation 25)                                                                                                                                                                    | 29 January 2010  |
| 30       | ensure that staff employed at the home on a temporary basis will not prevent the young people from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs (Regulation 25 (2))                                                                                                                                                                                  | 18 December 2009 |
| 34       | ensure that an individual of sufficient qualifications, skills and experience is appointed to manage the home (Regulations 7 and 8).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 4 December 2009  |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person and staff create an atmosphere in the home where bullying, including young people's attempts to bully staff, is known to be unacceptable and that the countering bullying policy successfully addresses such attempts (NMS 18.1)
- ensure a review of child protection incidents is conducted in collaboration the local safeguarding children service with a view to establishing whether there are any lessons to be learned, and how the practices in the home relate to those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in relation to prevention of abuse, methods of control and risk taking (NMS 17.5)
- ensure that sanctions are recorded in a separate dedicated bound and numbered book (NMS 22.10)
- ensure that effective work is done with the young people to enable them to develop a proper awareness of their rights and responsibilities including their responsibility not to cause harm to staff and others (22.14)



- ensure the regular consistent testing of the fire alarms (22.8)
- ensure that there is continuous weekly test of the fire alarms (NMS 26.8).