

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC068803
Inspection date	10/09/2010
Inspector	Sophie Wood
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	15/03/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2010

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 Crispins, 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 children's home occupies a large farmhouse style property with extensive outdoor space surrounded by fields and countryside. It has four bedrooms for young people and an office/sleep-in room, located over two floors. Each young person has their own room. There is a converted building next to the house which contains a gym, table tennis and pool rooms. The nearest town and village are accessed by the home's own transport provision.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced key inspection was conducted by one inspector over two days and all of the key standards were inspected.

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four boys aged between eight and seventeen; however, current plans are focusing upon accommodating those within the younger end of this scale.

Staff receive good levels of training and guidance which equips them to effectively meet the needs of those in their care. Placement planning is effective and young people receive good quality care packages from a team of committed staff.

Some omissions are noted with regards to record keeping, quality assurance processes and the general aesthetics of the home; none of which have a direct impact upon the safety or welfare of those in placement. These areas are clearly referred to within the main body of this report.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous random inspection of 15 March 2010, no actions or recommendations were made.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit by having their health and medical needs thoroughly researched as soon as their referral details are received. This is further supported through immediate registration with local health services as soon as they move in.

The care files selected for inspection hold good, clear details with regards to medical and health histories, consent for treatment, ongoing interventions, medication administration, accidents and illnesses.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities; this is reinforced through appropriate ongoing training and routine competence checks. In addition, the organisation employs a full-time qualified nurse who provides additional training and monitoring safeguards.

Staff provide appropriate levels of support to attend appointments: outcomes are clearly documented and shared with placing social workers. Hence, the ongoing health needs of young people are being effectively tracked and monitored.

Staff actively encourage young people to make healthy choices with regards to physical activities and meals. This is further supported and enhanced through ongoing staff training; hence, an educative approach is delivered to young people on topics such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.

The home provides very good opportunities for young people to engage in regular physical activities: equipment includes basketball nets, football equipment, bikes and an indoor gym area.

Young people speak positively about the meals provided. They are actively encouraged to assist with menu planning and shopping and have ample opportunities to prepare their own snacks and drinks. The kitchen is adequately equipped and the dining area is large enough to accommodate everyone at mealtimes.

Good hygiene and safety is promoted through staff's implementation of the training they receive. Although minor omissions are noted with regards to food storage, the actual risks to health are negligible.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff implement clear procedural guidance which serves to protect and promote the privacy and confidentiality of the young people. Routine daily practice ensures that written information is securely stored and shared appropriately. Young people confirm their privacy is respected and this includes washing facilities and enjoying telephone and electronic contact with family and friends in private.

Young people know how to make representations and complaints and are actively encouraged to do so through a variety of ways. Written records detail the nature, investigation process and outcome: young people are encouraged to make written entries detailing their levels of satisfaction at the end of the process. At present, all complaints from all possible parties are held in the same log and this presents potential difficulties in terms of monitoring.

Young people can be assured of being well protected against possible sources of harm and abuse. All staff receive regular, ongoing safeguarding training and implement the home's clear procedures in practice. The organisation has a dedicated safeguarding officer who retains a lead role across all of the homes. Staff are vigilant in their approach to safeguarding and report concerns swiftly.

The same robust approach applies to countering bullying, whereby staff are proactive in the first instance through ongoing discussions with the young people. Those spoken with confirm that incidents of 'arguing and falling out' are quickly and effectively dealt with. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans readily identify a young person's vulnerability with regards to bullying and this heightens staff awareness.

In the event of a young person being missing, staff deploy clear procedures to secure the individual's safe return. Staff spoken with are confident that they understand the guidance, which is effectively modified and tailored in accordance with each young person's individual needs, in terms of their perceived vulnerability when away from home.

Staff are keen to promote positive behaviour and conduct through good role modelling and the use of rewards. Where unacceptable behaviour is exhibited, explicitly clear guidance is in place with regards to the use of permissible sanctions. In the event of extreme and dangerous conduct, the guidance on the use of approved physical restraint techniques is equally clear. Staff receive accredited training on this. However, written records of such interventions being deployed are not always clear and neither do all contain clear evidence of being robustly monitored or evaluated.

Staff are observed to interact positively with the young people, opting to use diffusing and de-escalation techniques as their preferred option. They are also mindful of the positive aspects of keeping the young people engaged in activities which prevent boredom and the opportunity to create negative situations for themselves. Written records demonstrate a low level use of sanctions and restraints and this further supports the home's aim to create a safe, relaxed environment which positively impacts upon those living there.

The home, including its additional buildings and extensive garden provides good levels of safety and security for the young people. Generic risk assessments cover all of the required areas and these are subject to regular review and amendment. Routine health and safety checks further ensure that safety and security is promoted. A small number of omissions within the recording systems of such checks do not currently pose a significant risk of harm or injury; however, these have not been picked up through internal monitoring and this factor is of concern.

Fire safety within the home is taken very seriously, in the best interests of all concerned. Young people understand the importance of regular escape practises and written records support that all of the required routine checks and servicing of

equipment is undertaken regularly. Whereby a young person presents additional fire safety risks, this is clearly documented and all of the staff are fully aware.

Robust recruitment practices serve to protect young people. Staff do not commence with their employment until all of the required checks have been satisfactorily returned. Personnel files are in good order and home managers are integral to the recruitment process; however, at present it is only the human resources manager who has received safer recruitment training. Visitors to the home are closely monitored, with their identity and the purpose of their visit clearly verified before gaining entry.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good levels of individualised support. This is clearly detailed within their current support plans. From inception into the home, young people are allocated with a key worker who takes immediate responsibility for the coordination of appointments and liaison with all other involved parties. This includes family members, education services and the placing social worker. Those staff members spoken with demonstrate a clear understanding of this key role.

Young people say they enjoy positive relationships with their key workers, as well as additional staff members and they value the one to one time they routinely spend with them. This stated, the home, and the wider organisation, is currently evaluating its key worker systems because internal quality assurance findings indicate this process is not as effective and valuable as the organisation would like it to be.

Close scrutiny of one young person's care file indicates a lack of proactive intervention by the placing authority due to a proposed imminent move to another service. Although staff present as being frustrated by this, there is limited evidence to demonstrate the home's approach and intervention in terms of actively advocating on behalf of the individual and making the very best use of the placement whilst this young person remains in residence.

The educational needs of young people are comprehensively researched at the referral stage. This enables the home to explore a variety of options which best suit the needs of the individual, including local mainstream provision and individual personal tutor arrangements. Young people are effectively supported to be prepared for the school day and staff ensure individuals arrive on time. The physical layout of the home lends itself to being conducive to the completion of homework: there are sufficient quiet areas and the home provides good resources for young people.

The individual interests and hobbies of those accommodated are actively encouraged and provided for. The age range and current interests of the young people is positively reflected by the immediate on-site provision in place.

Within the home, the young people are able to access games stations, computers,

the internet, books, board games and other appropriate games materials. The separate annex offers gym equipment, a table tennis room, pool room and additional outdoor sporting equipment. The immediate grounds provide for plenty of external activities, including football and a separate basketball area. Although such provision is well-received by the vast majority of those in placement, the home remains acutely aware that not every young person will want these specific types of activities and leisure pursuits. To this end, those accommodated are clearly asked for their own specific interests and views with regards to leisure pursuits and hobbies. In real terms, the home works very hard to ensure that young people receive, and gain access to, the leisure pursuits that are meaningful and of interest to them as individuals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Good systems and processes ensure that detailed referral information is obtained. This enables young people to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Initial placement meetings gain the information needed to formulate detailed and clear care plans which are specific to the individual. All staff are required to be fully familiar with these documents, including the 24 hour management plans, in an effort to ensure consistency for the young people.

Young people are effectively supported to plan and prepare for their statutory review meetings. Staff provide comprehensive reports for these and also conduct regular in-house reviews of the 24 hour management plans. One such plan has not been sufficiently updated and although the key worker demonstrates a good understanding of the individual's changing needs, this is not reflected in the document which other staff are dependent upon.

Staff spoken with are able to clearly communicate their understanding of the presenting needs of the young people currently in placement. They know the reasons for the placements and demonstrate a good understanding of the support they are being required to provide. This is largely attributed to regular team meetings, during which, the team routinely discusses and reviews the progress of the young people.

Young people are effectively supported to maintain positive family contact. They value this. Staff plan for such arrangements effectively and demonstrate an excellent understanding of how such contacts can have a positive and negative impact upon individuals. Whereby such arrangements need to be monitored or supervised, as stated within placement plans, staff explain and manage this sensitively.

Young people are empowered to positively influence how the home is run. This is achieved through individual key working sessions and collectively, through regular house meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has very clear policies and procedures with regards to supporting young people into adulthood and independent living. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of these processes. Currently, no young person accommodated is entering this life stage; hence, this aspect could not be fully explored at this inspection. Young people are encouraged to undertake domestic tasks, commensurate with their age and understanding and this factor positively impacts upon the acquisition of independent living skills.

Young people take pride in their bedrooms and are able to choose how these are furnished and decorated. Plenty of opportunities are in place to earn additional pocket money and individuals are supported, where necessary, to purchase their own personal requisites and clothes.

Young people enjoy living in a spacious, well maintained home. They are particularly positive about the additional provision, which houses gym equipment, table tennis and a separate pool room. Such additional facilities, as well as a spacious garden and two lounges ensures the young people have plenty of freedom of movement and the opportunity to mix with their peers or to spend time alone.

Effective maintenance systems promote safety and the furniture throughout the home is of good quality. Although in good order, the internal décor is bland and designated staff areas, including an office and toilet are kept locked, necessitating staff to carry keys at all times. This combination detracts from creating a homely environment, which can be additionally distressing when this is a young person's first episode in care.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are valued and respected: their own unique needs are integral to the home's care planning processes. There is a good gender mix of staff and the flexible training programme ensures the team receives appropriate guidance to continue to meet the individual, specific needs of those in placement.

All stakeholders can be assured that they are in receipt of accurate information about the home and the wider organisation. The website and Statement of Purpose is subject to ongoing review and amendment; hence these documents remain updated. This particular home is currently focusing upon providing placements for younger children and is therefore engaging young people to assist in reviewing and updating the current children's guide.

Induction and supervision processes for staff are thorough and this impacts positively

upon service provision. New staff are suitably inducted and do not engage in lone working until they are deemed as fit to do so. A rolling programme of training covers all of the core, mandatory subjects and the organisation swiftly provides additional training, should young people present with specific needs.

Staff speak positively with regards to supervision processes. They confirm the receipt of monthly individual and group supervision meetings, delivered by staff who are qualified to do so. Written records support this good practice; however, individual records are variable in quality and the pro forma in use does not clearly track issues carried over from the last meeting to the next. Hence, themes and actions are at risk of being lost.

Adequate numbers of staff are deployed to cover each shift pattern, comprising of experienced, senior and junior members. The number of staff on duty at any given time ensures the young people's activities and needs are effectively provided for. There is a clear out of hours on call system, whereby senior service managers can respond to crises without delay.

Regular monitoring and quality assurance checks are being implemented in accordance with the national minimum standards and regulations. The resulting reports are detailed and clearly refer to areas of good practice and those requiring development and improvement. The home takes these findings seriously and initiates improvement actions swiftly, in the best interests of the young people. Close scrutiny of these processes show a number of omissions, whereby shortfalls with regards to routine health and safety checks have not been identified during such monitoring visits. There are also areas, such as complaints, sanctions and restraints, which are being monitored purely from a quantity and not quality perspective. Hence, the opportunity to further develop reflective practice within the team is being hindered.

Care files for young people are securely held. They hold clear details of their presenting needs and are generally well maintained and updated to accurately reflect the changing needs of those young people currently in placement.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
32	ensure the provider's monitoring of the records of health and safety checks, complaints, disciplinary measures and use of restraint are robustly monitored (National Minimum Standard	23/10/2010

	32.2, Regulation 33)	
33	ensure the monitoring checks undertaken by the Registered Manager are robust and clearly recorded (National Minimum Standard 33, Regulation 34(1)(a), Schedule 6)	23/10/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff effectively implement the training they receive with regards to food hygiene checks and storage (National Minimum Standard 10)
- consider the value of providing additional staff with safer recruitment training (National Minimum Standard 27)
- ensure that the individualised support needs of young people are accurately reflected and updated within their placement plans (National Minimum Standard 7)
- consider the value of redecoration and review the perceived need for locks on specific doors, in view of providing good quality domestic style facilities (National Minimum Standard 24)
- review the current staff supervision pro forma to ensure that development areas and agreed actions are effectively tracked and monitored. (National Minimum Standard 28)