

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC356864
Inspection date	13 January 2010
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	9 February 2009
--------------------------------	-----------------

© 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 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 a privately run children's home, which provides care and accommodation for two young people of either sex, aged from 10 years to 17 years of age.

The home is a detached four bedroom property, situated in a residential area. On the first floor of the house, there is a bathroom and four individual bedrooms, two of which are staff sleep-in rooms. One of these doubles as an office. On the ground floor, there is a lounge, kitchen with dining area, toilet, utility room and conservatory.

The home has an enclosed rear garden and to the front of the property there is a driveway, providing car parking for a number of cars.

Summary

This unannounced interim inspection focused on the outcome area 'staying safe' and followed up the action and recommendations made following the last inspection and notifications made to Ofsted since then. The management and staffing arrangements of the home were also checked. One young person was present during and contributed to the inspection.

The organisation and management of the home are satisfactory. Young people like living at the home and feel safe. There are some good policies and procedures to promote the safety and welfare of young people. However, there are shortfalls in the recording of information and in some safeguarding practices, such as staff training in safeguarding. There are six recommendations made where the home fails to meet the national minimum standards and two breaches of regulations that require action.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

One action and four recommendations were made following the last inspection, all relating to the outcome area 'staying safe'. All have been addressed. A written policy on the use of mobile phones promotes the safety and welfare of young people and staff. All unauthorised absences are logged in a bound book, as are all room searches and complaints. This ensures the home has clear records of the action it takes in response to serious incidents. Portable electrical appliances are checked annually to ensure they remain safe to use.

A further recommendation was to ensure young people have written pathway plans completed to reflect their future needs for support. The home requests pathway plans from placing social workers to guide staff in helping young people to prepare for independence. It is not always successful in getting all the written information staff need from social workers to enable them to care properly for young people. Young people approaching 17 do not have written pathway plans, and as a result they and the staff team cannot be clear about what particular support they need to prepare for adult life.

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.

Young people feel safe in the home and report that they are well looked after by caring and considerate staff. They say this home compares well to other children's homes and the current young person, who has lived in several, reports it is the best. Young people say they have privacy when they need to. Staff follow good procedures for the storage of confidential information. A written policy on the use of mobile phones promotes the safety and welfare of young people and staff. All room searches are logged in a bound book.

Young people know how to complain and are confident that any concerns or complaints will be listened to and acted upon. There have been four complaints since the last inspection and the record shows that all have been dealt with. Young people's safety is promoted because allegations against staff are appropriately dealt with and are referred to the local safeguarding unit where necessary. The home follows the recommendations of strategy meetings and this promotes young people's welfare. Although staff are trained in safeguarding procedures as part of their induction, they start work before they have had this training. This means that staff who are on probation do not always have the skills to keep young people safe.

Staff and young people know there is zero tolerance to bullying. There have been instances where young people who have persistently bullied others have been discharged from the home at short notice. Unauthorised absences are logged in a bound book and arrangements are in place to promote the safety of young people who are missing from home. However, these young people are not offered the opportunity to meet with an independent person to explore the reason for their absence. This means any reason for the absence that relates to the home may not come to light.

Serious incidents are recorded and notified to the relevant authorities, including Ofsted, where appropriate. The home does not always notify Ofsted of the outcome of safeguarding investigations. This impedes the regulator from assessing whether the home continues to provide young people with a safe place to live.

Young people learn to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of good behaviour and consistent, constructive and sensitive responses to inappropriate or challenging behaviour. The staff team are trained in the safe use of restraint so that they do not injure themselves or the young people when using this method of control. Restraint is used as a last resort and there have been no restraints for over a year.

Young people consider that sanctions are applied fairly. The record of sanctions is routinely monitored by the manager, however, it lacks detail and clarity. For example, where 50% of a young person's pocket money is withheld for reparation for damage, this is not clearly recorded so that it appears that young people are receiving fines.

Young people live in a home that is safe, secure and well maintained. Staff follow good health and safety measures and carry out routine daily and weekly checks on the safety and security of the premises. Annual checks on services and appliances are carried out by the relevant professionals and appropriate certificates are maintained as evidence. Portable electrical appliances are checked annually to ensure they remain safe to use. Young people and staff

practise fire drills so that they know how to evacuate the home safely, in the event of a house fire. Portable electrical appliances are checked annually to ensure they remain safe to use.

Robust recruitment procedures ensure that new staff are carefully vetted prior to their appointment within the home. All visitors sign the visitors' book and those who have not been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau are supervised in the presence of young people. Such practices help to protect children from the risk of exposure to potential abusers.

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.

The home was assessed against national minimum standard 6.1 only.

The home requests pathway plans from placing social workers to guide staff in helping young people to prepare for independence. It is not always successful in getting all the written information staff need from social workers to enable them to care properly for young people. As a result, young people approaching 17 do not have written pathway plans so they and the staff team cannot be clear about what particular support they need to prepare for adult life.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There has been a change of management and staff since the last inspection. A new manager was appointed in August 2009 but is not yet registered with Ofsted. New members of staff have been appointed and less than 80% of the staff team have completed their National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This means that young people are looked after by staff members who are not fully trained and competent to meet their complex and challenging needs.

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
17	notify, without delay, the persons indicated in Schedule 5 if any of the events listed therein takes place. In particular, the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home must be notified to Ofsted (Regulation 30 (1))	29 January 2010

22	ensure that no financial penalty is imposed on a young person other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation and that records demonstrate this. (Regulation 17-(5)(g)).	29 January 2010
----	--	-----------------

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records of room searches show the full details of the search and demonstrate that the search has been carried out in accordance with the home's guidance and on clear grounds (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that all staff receive training in an introduction to child protection procedures, fire training, medical procedures and recording before they start work in the home and that all care staff receive their full induction within six weeks of joining the home and their foundation training within six months of joining the home (NMS 31.3)
- improve the safeguarding training provided to ensure that all members of staff know and follow good child protection procedures (NMS 17.7, 17.8)
- ensure that when young people return to the home after being missing, they are seen by their social worker or a person independent of the home to consider any reason for absence without authority (NMS 19.4)
- ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent and that new staff already hold this qualification or begin working towards it within three months of joining the home (NMS 29.5)
- ensure young people have written pathway plans completed to reflect their future needs for support. (NMS 6.1).