

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC359818
Inspection date	22 July 2010
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	11 February 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 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

This is a four-bedded home that provides medium- to long-term care and accommodation for young people aged between 12 to 16 years; it is one of a number of homes operated by the same provider. Young people are referred to the home from a local authority as part of a contractual agreement.

The ground floor consists of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, utility room, toilet and two offices. The first floor consists of four bedrooms for young people, a bathroom and staff sleep-in room. There is a rear garden with sufficient space for ball games and a games room is accessible from the garden. The location of the home is close to a city centre and a range of amenities. The home is on a bus route.

All four young people contributed to this inspection in varying degrees.

Summary

This key unannounced inspection finds the overall quality rating to be good. This is a positive reflection on the staff team after a period of uncertainty during which the new manager started work. All areas of care are considered. The previous recommendations have been implemented. Attention is needed to one new action and two recommendations. These focus attention on admissions procedures in particular and also fire safety.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection made four recommendations only, which are all fully addressed. In addition though, the home has also now got a Registered Manager and this is a critical part of maintaining the effectiveness of the service. Full documentation is now available from adults who have legal responsibility for young people. This means that health professionals can promptly provide assistance with any health issues. In addition, the organisation has improved the documentation in this regard. The likely effect of any new young people on the group is assessed thoroughly. The safety of staff and young people is better now because a particular internal door is not locked anymore. This allows unrestricted exit during an emergency. The manager has also ensured that all staff are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. A thorough process was undertaken that included testing the understanding of staff. This helps to ensure that any child protection issue is addressed appropriately.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy an excellent range of meals, including some that represent other countries. Young people are always consulted about the menus and contribute substantially to meal preparations. Individual needs are addressed, for example, by adjusting meal times to fit in with young people's activities. Meals are sociable occasions that contribute substantially to the positive atmosphere in the home. Staff know what constitutes a healthy diet and ensure that most meals have a high nutritional content. It is to the credit of the organisation that young people are helped to undertake food safety training.

Young people benefit from close attention to their personal health in other ways too. There are strong links, for example, with the looked after children nurse who provides valuable information to young people about personal and sexual health. Any medication for young people is stored and administered appropriately and staff receive relevant training and professional support.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The welfare of young people is fully promoted in terms of the organisation of the home, such as separate male and female sleeping areas and single bedrooms to ensure privacy. There is also effective staff training. Shortfalls in staff's understanding are addressed promptly and thoroughly, by using case studies, for example. Any concerns about young people are identified by staff at an early stage through good communication with young people and the establishment of effective relationships. There are also substantial additional systems in place, such as questionnaires, to check welfare. Young people feel safe in the home and know that complaints are addressed thoroughly.

Bullying is well monitored by staff and effectively controlled. Instances of young people being absent without authority have led to positive action by the organisation, including a revision of procedures and training plus greater attention to prevention and recording. Appropriate authorities are very pleased with the amount and quality of the communication by staff. There is strong engagement with professional partners, whether it is routine information-sharing or regarding specific incidents. This contributes to improvements in the service and also to supporting young people, for instance, in regard to their behaviour management programmes.

The behaviour management procedures serve to engage young people and minimize physical interventions and sanctions, which is good practice. Young people are encouraged to behave positively and are rewarded for adhering to boundaries. Young people understand the scale of consequences that staff use. Overall, this is an important contribution to improving their skills and therefore their individual opportunities.

Young people benefit from high levels of physical safety and security. Fire precautions and other matters such as food safety are closely monitored. However, young people do not always respond appropriately to fire drills. Action is undertaken to resolve this problem but it is not addressed in the fire safety risk assessment. This means the risks will potentially be heightened in the event of an actual fire. The safety of young people is also addressed by a thorough staff recruitment process. Candidates undertake several exercises to check their suitability and young people are invited to contribute their opinions.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Each young person receives a good level of support. There are effective systems in place to make sure that each young person's religious or behavioural needs are met, for example. Staff also have regular opportunities to review issues with a clinical psychologist to ensure their practices are as effective as possible. Young people are encouraged to try a variety of recreational, sporting and social pastimes. This also helps with their health needs and social skills, such as self-confidence. At present, arrangements are being made for the summer holidays.

The home has a large activity room with pool and table tennis. The social and personal education of young people by staff is strongly supplemented by active support of formal education. In this regard too there are effective working relationships with colleagues outside the home in education services. Educational attainment and achievement are applauded.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The written placement plans for each young person are particularly detailed and extensive. They reflect a thorough system of review and updating, of routine involvement by young people and close liaison with families. Family contact itself is supported well. On a day-to-day basis, all young people are involved in decisions about their lives and influence the way the home is run. This highlights effective relationships between staff and young people. However, placement plans and risk assessments for young people are not implemented before or as soon as possible after their admission. This means that known hazardous behaviours are insufficiently addressed and place new and current young people and staff at unnecessary risk.

Young people are able to move into the home in a planned way and receive information about the home. They receive good key worker support. However, despite appropriate documentation, clear conclusions about the likely impact on the existing group are not reached and acted upon; this increases the risk to all parties.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The service is proactive in ensuring that young people of all ages have ample opportunities to learn independence skills. In practice, substantial progress is achieved by young people in areas such as budgeting, cooking, interpersonal skills and staying safe. Young people also learn positive lessons from the high standards provided by and maintained in the property itself.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service provides young people with a culturally diverse staff team that is appropriately trained in equality and diversity. Male and female staff challenge prejudicial and ill-informed comments and facilitate access to positive experiences of the community's social diversity. Young people receive high levels of attention to their individual needs and this is reflected in comprehensive personal files. This helps to redress their loss of opportunities. Practices in the home strongly reflect the written policies, for example, with regard to regular events at which different features of diversity are celebrated. Further work is underway regarding sexuality and disability.

The position of the company on equality and diversity is reflected in a thorough Statement of Purpose that also reflects the rights of young people. Young people also receive substantial written information about the service that is repeated verbally to them by staff. The Statement of Purpose also reflects the staffing arrangements. These are also very thorough, with designated bank staff covering most gaps in the rota. This means that young people experience reasonable continuity of care even when there is staff turnover. Staff supervision is given a high priority, too, and the new manager is ensuring that all staff are operating at the required level. This is supported by a thorough and flexible system of staff training that is operated by a dedicated

team. Staff display a good level of competence overall and are suitably qualified. There is an excellent mix of ages, gender and cultural backgrounds that is a benefit to young people.

Monitoring by the organisation and the manager is excellent. It also benefits from routine consultation about standards with stakeholders, such as young people, parents and social workers. A social worker recently said the service was 'fantastic'. Information is fed into the annual development plan, which the new manager is currently reviewing. It is to the credit of the team that high standards are being maintained despite a change of manager and some staff.

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
2	ensure that before providing accommodation for a child, or as soon as possible thereafter, a placement plan is prepared, that also sets out how his welfare will be safeguarded. (Regulation 12(1)(a))	23 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that risk assessments, such as those for fire safety, are regularly reviewed and reflect children's known or likely activities (NMS 26.2)
- ensure the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents, are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admission to the home. (NMS 5.7)