

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC370910
Inspection date	11/11/2010
Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	08/03/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This children's home, owned by a private company, is registered for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, aged between 11 and 17 years. The home is domestic in style and set within a small housing estate.

The home is a large detached house, providing spacious and comfortable communal facilities and three single bedrooms. There is an attractive wooded garden area to the front and rear of the property. Young people can easily access shops and community facilities in the vicinity, and a nearby city by public transport or transport provided by the home.

Three young people were at the home at various times during this inspection and two made their views known to the inspector.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The home continues to offer good support to young people with complex social and emotional needs.

Young people are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle and identify concerns they have about any aspect of their health and welfare while living in the home.

Staff communicate well with young people and pay particular attention to helping them manage situations that may pose a risk to their safety. Staff work effectively with other professionals supporting young people.

Young people have good relationships with staff. These are built over a period of time and young people feel safe and cared for. One professional colleague described the home as a nurturing environment. The staff team, led by the manager have embraced the change in the staff group and support the new staff. Staff feel supported by their managers and seniors.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people participate in formulating menus and assist in preparing meals. The variety of food on offer takes into account food choices, allergies and preferences. Young people are encouraged to eat healthy foods and snacks. Treats are restricted and intake monitored. Young people are encouraged to explore foods from different parts of the world and cultural quizzes have been introduced to strengthen young people's understanding of other people and cultures.

Young people have access to good universal and specialist health services. All young people have detailed health plans which identify what particular support is required and what areas they are knowledgeable about. Young people's information is personalised and written in the first person. The home has access to a therapist that can offer support. There is also support available from the children and adolescent mental health services.

A healthy and active lifestyle is promoted in the home through exercise, walking locally and encouraging the take up of hobbies that promote good health. Young people are supported to understand the dangers of alcohol, smoking and drug use. Smoking is not encouraged in the home. Staff receive first aid training and manage medication well. All medication consent forms are signed and young people have a risk assessment to ensure they are able to self medicate responsibly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people report that their privacy is respected. All young people have keys to their rooms. They are in turn encouraged to respect the privacy of other young people. The office on the ground floor is locked most of the time and files with confidential information are stored in lockable cabinets.

Young people are familiar with the complaints procedure and know how to use this. Records show that recent complaints have been satisfactorily concluded. Written responses to complaints sent to young people are sensitive and demonstrate that their complaints are taken seriously.

Staff know how to promote the safety of young people. The company has introduced a detailed red flag procedure which is familiar to all staff and ensures any concerns are forwarded to senior managers in the company. Any suspicions or allegations of abuse, bullying, self harm and other serious safeguarding issues are swiftly acted upon and shared with the relevant agencies. Staff have developed good relationships with social workers assigned to young people. Social workers state, 'Communication with the home is good and concerns are always shared appropriately.' Young people do not report any bullying or threatening behaviour. Young people are also aware that they can seek the support of an advocate or use services such as Childline to

discuss any issues or complaints they may have. Staff assist young people to take responsibility for their personal safety.

Young people understand that any unauthorised absence will be reported to the police and the placing authority. The home has procedures in place to manage absence. Young people do not routinely go missing from the home instead enjoying the stability and security it offers.

Staff have a system of behaviour management. The staff are keen to ensure that they do not give mixed messages to young people. Positive behaviour such as demonstrations of maturity, an increase in personal responsibility and self help skills are rewarded. Sanctions, known as consequences, are used for the breach of agreed rules (such as smoking on the premises) or unacceptable behaviour (damage to property). These are reasonable and considered fair by young people. Staff have been trained to manage behaviour when young people pose a threat to themselves or others. This is seldom used. The central record of consequences and physical intervention is up to date. One young person said, 'I don't always like it but the sanctions are fair.'

Young people are protected by robust health and safety procedures. Regular fire and safety checks are undertaken with contracts in place for the servicing of fire equipment.

Risk assessments are in place to help monitor and manage a variety of risks associated with the building and contents in the home. Young people undertake regular fire drills and demonstrate good knowledge of evacuation procedures.

Thorough checks are undertaken for anyone seeking employment in the home. The home has employed a number of new members of staff. Although not inspected on this occasion as records are held at the company's head office, the manager assures me that checks are routinely carried out to ensure that potential staff are suitable to work with young people.

All visitors to the home must sign in and out of the home and have identification.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive individual support from dedicated staff and more formally through the key work system. All young people have a key worker. While the key worker is the main person responsible for supporting the young person, all members of staff are accessible to young people. Young people with the help of key workers identify areas they need to improve upon. This is then addressed through daily contact and key work sessions. Young people confide in adults independent of the home if they wish to.

One social worker commented, 'The young person has allowed herself to be cared for.'

All young people have detailed individual risk assessments. These are undertaken to help the staff and young people understand and manage risk while promoting and maintaining their independence. Risk assessments are updated to reflect an increase or decrease in risk.

Staff encourage young people to engage in some form of education or training. This is considered to be an important part of their development. This increases their social circles and promotes learning in a different environment. Good relationships have been established with all places of learning and this has been positive for young people. In addition young people are able to pursue their own interests and hobbies such as dog walking, cadets and laser quest. When young people show an interest this is nurtured and supported. Young people take care of their pets in the home. All young people have hamsters and some have fish. Young people are able to have holidays with staff if they wish. The last summer break in Cornwall proved successful.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Information with regards to care plans, reviews, and placement information is evident. Plans completed by the home assessing the needs of young people demonstrate that they have taken the time to get to know and understand them. These give an accurate account of how young people are and how they are developing. Young people have up-to-date daily contact records which are accessible and used by staff to work with young people from one shift to the next. Young people participate in their reviews and contribute to the plans for their future.

Young people maintain contact with their families. These relationships receive excellent support from staff. Staff travel considerable distances to facilitate contact and re establish relationships. Staff are skilled at offering young people ongoing support during and following difficult meetings. Staff communicate well with young people's relatives and include them in events around the home, school and their social activities. Relatives and friends are able to visit the home.

When it is planned that a young person comes to stay in the home there is a clear structured approach to helping them become familiar with the staff and the home. Young people are given written information about the home. This contains details that are pertinent to a young person entering an unfamiliar environment. Likewise when a young person is moving on, for example to semi independent living they are very well supported in the transition process.

Decisions made in the home take young people's wishes, feelings and opinions into consideration. Residents meetings take place regularly and address issues that are relevant to the young people living there. The minutes do not consistently reflect how issues raised are addressed and fed back to young people.

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff. One young person stated, 'I like all the staff they are caring.' Staff make great efforts to get to know and understand

young people. Relationships are based on honesty and mutual respect. Staff lead by example and demonstrate that they have the young people's best interests at the centre of what they do. One review officer noted, 'There is a trusting relationship between the young people and the staff.' This was evident during the inspection. Staff exercise a lot of patience and understanding of young people's behaviour and frustrations. These are not taken personally by staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted to prepare for independence by developing new skills they will require when they leave the home. These include domestic responsibilities, budgeting, making and keeping appointments. This is with the aim of improving young people's life chances when they leave the home.

The accommodation provided has a good range of private and communal space and is well maintained. Each young person is provided with their own bedroom which is personalised. Young people can join the others in the comfortable lounge, dining area and kitchen as and when they wish to. Young people have commented verbally and in residents meetings that the showerhead fitting requires replacing as they are unable to have a hands free shower.

There is a large garden which provides young people with a safe and secure outside space.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's cultural and religious needs are taken into account and inclusive practice underpins the care provided. Staff ensure that diversity and difference is valued and whatever young people's circumstances are they are supported to reach their full potential. Staff promote equality by ensuring that young people are respected and valued as individuals.

The home has a statement of purpose which has been recently updated and makes clear the home's ethos and practice. This enables those seeking a placement there to make an informed decision.

A real strength of this home is the hands on leadership of the manager and the experience of the core staff team. They are very skilled in working with the young people who have complex needs. The level of commitment of staff to help young people to achieve is high. Senior staff support newer staff on shifts. The home uses present staff to cover shifts and now rarely employs agency staff in the home. The staff team has changed and male staff are now working in the home. The manager is

developing newer members of staff to ensure the whole staff team is confident about working with young people. Staff have the opportunity to attend training in all aspects of care and support to young people. All mandatory training is undertaken by staff. Daily handover meetings take place and information is recorded to ensure important points are not missed.

The team state that they feel valued by the manager and deputy. Supervisions are meaningful and regular. Team meetings have lapsed in the past few months due to staff changes. This has meant that the team is not discussing issues in a way that fully promotes consistency, debate and planned development.

In addition to monthly Regulation 33 visits, the manager monitors all records of sanctions, restraints, complaints and accidents. This means that children and young people are supported by a manager that regularly reviews practice. One professional colleague stated, 'the manager does her best with the recent changes that have taken place and we are optimistic about our new staff and the development of the team.'

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- provide written feedback of decisions made following residents meetings so young people can have evidence that their views have been fully considered (NMS 8).
- repair the shower fittings for ease of use (NMS 24).
- ensure that staff meetings occur at least monthly (NMS 28.10).