

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC372613
Inspection date	02/11/2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	28/01/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 is a small children's home that looks after up to two young people, of either gender, aged between 10 and 17 years. It is located in a large three-storey former farmhouse style property, situated in a semi rural setting on the outskirts of a busy market town. The operation of the home allows staff to adjust the environment and the care provided to meet the specific needs of the children and young people accommodated. The layout of the home allows staff to adjust the environment and the care provided to address the needs of the young people accommodated.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced key inspection. One young person presently living in the home was present during the inspection and contributed to the process in a limited capacity. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as good with some outstanding features alongside examples of very good practice. Children receive an individualised care package that readily adapts to changing needs and is effective in assessing while promoting health and well-being. The home has been thoroughly redecorated to a high standard throughout providing a very homely environment in which children are nurtured and enabled to develop.

The registered person provides good direction and focused leadership to an enthusiastic, well-trained staff team thereby ensuring a very good quality of overall service. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the children they look after. Administration is comprehensive and confirms the good service being provided

This inspection has identified one good practice recommendation.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the registered person ensured that the annual development plan was brought up to date and that the home's manager attains an appropriate National Vocational Qualification level 4 equivalent management course. These recommendations have been satisfactorily acted upon confirming that the organisation places importance on the ongoing effective management of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Mealtimes at the home reflect individual children and young people's preferences and tastes. Children and young people are involved with meal planning, purchase and preparation, helping them to develop their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet. The range of food provided by the home indicates that children experience a varied and nutritionally balanced menu.

The health needs of children and young people are being competently addressed by staff following prescribed company policies that promote general medical well-being. Case files contain health plans in which details of individual medical needs and areas where the involvement of therapists or other health professionals is beneficial. All children and young people are quickly registered with local health services upon their admission to the home, as confirmed by comprehensive recording of all health related appointments. Permissions are obtained for all medical interventions. Staff know how to safely administer and competently record various forms of medication. Up-to-date first aid training which helps staff deal effectively with minor accidents and medical emergencies is in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

By following the established policies and procedures produced by the registered provider, staff are helped to ensure that children and young people are effectively safeguarded. Comprehensive guidance is provided covering areas of child protection, including countering bullying, effective behaviour management and dealing with unauthorised absences.

Staff are aware of the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board including how to recognise signs of abuse or situations where children and young people put themselves at risk or may self-harm. The registered person provides ongoing safeguarding training to ensure staff knowledge remains up to date with changing threats, for example, those posed by the unsupervised access to the internet.

The complaints of children and young people are taken very seriously by staff at the home. Children and young people's everyday concerns are listened to and acted upon where necessary. There is an accessible complaints policy and procedure that is summarised in the young person's guide. Serious concerns would be addressed using the safeguarding children policy guidance that invites external scrutiny of practice. Children and young people have access to a national advocacy service and retain some access to their parents.

Staff practice evidences that each child and young person's right to privacy and confidentiality is upheld. This is achieved by providing children and young people

with their own bedrooms, although when necessary to protect individual safety, room checks will be conducted following established procedures. All personal information is confidentially stored and staff communication with other stakeholders is professional and formally recorded.

The use of statutory reporting systems ensures that relevant authorities can be effectively informed about significant events such as unauthorised absences. By reviewing and where necessary adapting care practice the Registered Manager can quickly respond to emerging needs specific to each child and young person.

Staff effectively manage the behaviour of children and young people by encouraging and rewarding acceptable conduct while adjusting their levels of supervision according to changing needs. The house staffing complement is flexibly adjusted according to resident numbers and complexity of need. Children and young people know what the house rules and behavioural expectations of the home are because staff help them to understand and adjust to daily routines. Children and young people are actively encouraged to think about the reasons for any poor behaviour to enable them to work on improvement. Positive behaviour is verbally praised and may accumulate to attract practical rewards. How children and young people behave and respond to all social situations is carefully assessed as an important component of their overall care plan.

Staff receive regular training in behaviour management which includes the safe use of physical restraint using a nationally recognised methodology. This training is refreshed annually and any incidents are evaluated by the home's manager to ensure consistent practice is adopted by the entire staff team. Consistency and vigilance helps to keep children and young people safe from themselves and others. The views and opinions of children and young people will always be sought when evaluating behaviour. This practice helps to inform and improve the effectiveness, safety and quality of the care being provided.

By conducting regular checks on all environmental health and safety matters, including fire precautionary measures, the home is maintained in a safe condition by the registered person. Children and young people know how to respond in an emergency, complying routinely with alarm testing and practising house evacuation.

The Registered Manager and staff personnel records for the home confirm that the recruitment of care staff follows sound company practice that ensures applicants are appropriately vetted and competent to work with children and young people. The small staff team complement requires all staff to be experienced and appropriately qualified.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children and young people are well cared for by staff that display a good understanding and awareness of child development which enables them to

competently assess behaviour. The home can care for up to two children and young people who may have differing needs but will collectively require consistency of support through the application of explicit behavioural boundaries and positive adult nurturing within a safe, protected and caring environment.

Children and young people are enabled to develop their confidence and practical abilities by being supported with a wide variety of in-house, community-based and company-wide activities that assist self-awareness, the development of identity and improved self-esteem. They are enabled to take a pride in their home by creating and displaying artwork, such as wall murals in bedrooms.

Where necessary children and young people living at this home may can access additional external services appropriate to their specific therapeutic care needs, substance misuse, offending behaviours or independence planning from a range of professional sources. The manager and staff team promote children and young people's attitudes and understanding of gender, diversity, acceptance and tolerance both within the home and the wider community by challenging inappropriate behaviour towards social difference in an age-appropriate manner.

Children and young people's academic needs are promoted by being able to receive education provided through one of the registered provider's schools. Introduction and attendance is initially phased to encourage acceptance. Attendance involves being transported and supported in the educational setting by care staff, a process through which consistency of supervision is provided. Education is set within a national curriculum framework, which is amended to reflect each child or young person's ability level to accentuate achievement. Personal Education Plans and Individual Education Plans are produced following the child or young person's first statutory review of the placing authorities care plan.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective care planning is evidenced by focused plans that identify the purpose of the placement and how care plans will be progressed. Placement at this home is well planned and recognises the aims and objectives of the risks to be addressed. Children and young people's case files confirm that progress is scheduled for statutory review in a timely manner.

Placing authorities are kept informed of the children and young people's progress, in placement, through the compilation of incidental and regular monthly, outcome focused reports. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details that are subject to internal review at regular team meeting. These assess the accuracy and effectiveness of the care being provided. Informative reports are produced by the Registered Manager and the staff team to inform each Looked After Child (LAC) statutory review.

Meaningful contact with children and young people's families is supported by the

home within the parameters approved by the placing authority care plan. Children and young people are enabled to maintain telephone contact and will be practically supported on visits, thereby ensuring they are not put at risk.

Children and young people are actively involved with the decision making processes that affect the everyday running of the home. Key work sessions are established soon after the first review that report upon individual related matters such as confidentiality, cultural issues or how the children and young people's views may be best represented. Daily interactions between staff and children and young people and direct observation confirms that the home provides a relaxed setting where children and young people and staff jointly develop the care routines and influence how the home is used to its best capacity.

Monthly staff team meeting minutes demonstrate that children and young people's issues are dealt with using a consistent, risk aware, child-centred approach. The home's generic documentation confirms that staff provide realistic boundaries and are consistently caring in their practice. This actively promotes children and young people's welfare. Children and young people respond positively about the care they receive through their acceptable behaviour and inspection comments.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are looked after in a traditional style home that is domestic in scale, homely in character, very well maintained and decorated to a good standard throughout. The home is comfortably furnished providing children and young people a good quality living environment in which stimulating items, such as, toys and games are readily accessible. The personal computer for children and young people's use is safely located and affords protected internet access.

The home has a large functional garden with a trampoline for exercise and recreation. Children and young people have their own well-appointed and individualised bedrooms and a choice of bathrooms. The entire home is well appointed throughout including areas not accessible by children and young people. This reflects the sense of ownership and commitment exercised by the staff team.

Although the present care plan and resident is not being prepared for leaving care the placement plan does afford the opportunity for the young person to acquire some skills useful for adulthood. Life skills are informally being introduced through limited involvement with some of the core tasks involved with running the home such as; shopping, personal budgeting, cooking and undertaking selected daily household chores.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations. The Statement of Purpose and the child-friendly format children's guide for the home contains relevant information about how the home will provide care for children and young people. Children and young people are helped to understand the contents and meaning of their guide because staff take time to ensure they understand what it says.

The Registered Manager effectively communicates with social workers from the placing authority to ensure the care needs of children and young people in placement are addressed in partnership.

The home provides an environment where children and young people are practically supported with every aspect of their daily living by a competent and qualified staff team. The Registered Manager supports staff by providing regular supervision and access to professional training, however, staff do not always receive the full supervision time prescribed by the national minimum standards.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home recognises the importance of promoting equality and diversity. This is confirmed by the way the specific issues and cultural needs of children and young people have been assessed and responded to. Staff receive awareness training. The manager's gate-keeping ensures only appropriate children and young people are admitted to the home.

The complement of residential care staff, as identified by the home's Statement of Purpose, can provide individualised care on a 1:1 ratio for children and young people. Any shortfalls on the rota are covered by the home's manager, house staff or known staff from other homes in the provider's organisation to reduce the potential for disruption to the children and young people's care routine or required levels of support.

The Registered Manager has established a clear process to regularly monitor the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided by the home. The content of the in-house monitoring is very good and evidenced by robust recording. Monthly monitoring takes place through the use of a Regulation 33 visitor to confirm that the home is operating within the scope of its Statement of Purpose. Children and young people's feedback importantly contributes to the content of the quality monitoring systems. The ongoing and future operational needs of the home are outlined by an annual development plan.

The case files of resident children and young people are safely stored and easily accessible to the staff team. There are effective policies that promote the security and confidentiality of all personal records. Children and young people are made aware of the contents of their files and can request to read them. Children and

young people are asked to contribute to the records by signing many of the recordings relating to them.

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):

- ensure that each member of staff receives at least one and a half hours supervision from a senior member of staff each month. (national minimum standard 28.2)