

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372652
Inspection date	8 March 2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 January 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 service is a single occupancy children's home specifically developed to offer accommodation and care to a young person with emotional and behavioural difficulties being prepared for independence. The semi-detached family style home is unobtrusively located on a residential estate in a large rural community. The home affords easy access to all major amenities, education and recreational facilities.

Summary

At this full key inspection all outcome areas were inspected. The home is judged as good.

Young people are receiving individualised care that is consistently applied while being sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing needs. Young people are enabled to access community further education with support. Staff relate very well to young people and help prepare them for independence whilst acknowledging the limits of each individual's ability.

The organisation of day-to-day practice remains effective and the home functions well. Staff receive good levels of support and instruction from their manager. This ensures that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and understand and respond effectively to the needs of the young people being cared for.

No actions or recommendations have been raised as a result of the inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations set at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people help to prepare and enjoy healthy and varied meals that take account of their individual health needs and personal preferences. Young people are taught the need to eat healthily because trained staff provide sound advice and guidance that helps improve awareness and understanding.

Health needs are addressed by staff following prescribed company policies that effectively promote the health and wellbeing of all young people. Case files include comprehensive health plans relating to each individual's specific health, medical and psychological needs. Clear recording practice and ongoing assessment that includes young people's responses confirms that good health is positively promoted by the home.

The company medication policy prescribes proven procedures and best practice guidance for staff. Medication for young people, when needed, is safely stored. First aid arrangements in the home are good and effectively employed by trained staff. Staff respond efficiently when they are required to deal with circumstances such as minor accidents or when helping young people access emergency medical services.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff respect each individual's right to privacy and confidentiality by providing young people with their own bedroom, by protecting sensitive personal information and by exercising discretion when discussing young people with other professionals.

Any concerns or complaints young people may have are always taken seriously by care staff. This is demonstrated by concerns being effectively addressed before they become a formal complaint. The home has a responsive complaints policy and procedure that is summarised in the young person's guide. Young people know how to raise concerns and who they can complain to. They are provided, early in their stay at the home, with an introduction to and the services of an independent advocate should they need advice or require help. The absence of any complaints confirms the home's stability.

The safety and welfare of young people living at the home are promoted by the registered provider's policies. These recognise regulatory requirements and good practice in all areas of child protection and safeguarding practice by including: countering bullying, effective behaviour management and how to practically safeguard children and young people. Staff are taught the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board indicating how to recognise any signs of abuse or self harm. The home has a connection to the internet providing access to regularly updated regional multi-agency procedures. The company provides regular staff development events to ensure that statutory and specialist training informs staff on how to look after young people, including those with educational and behavioural needs, safely.

The home's unauthorised absence procedure is effective in deterring young people from putting themselves at risk by absencing themselves without staff permission or support.

Management of young people's behaviour is based on encouraging acceptable social interactions by providing unambiguous expectations and praising cooperative and positive behaviour. Staffing numbers in the home are increased whenever necessary to respond to young people's safety needs. Staff treat young people fairly and with respect and tolerance and this approach has been rewarded by generally good behaviour and a minimal need for the use of sanctions and physical controls. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management which includes the safe use of physical restraint using an approved intervention methodology. To ensure safe practice, training is refreshed annually and all incidents are evaluated by the home's manager. The opinions of young people are enlisted and recorded to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the home's practice.

The home produces effective and wide ranging risk assessments for all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, from the risk from fire and hazards or from young people's behaviour and recreational activities. To remain effective these assessments are regularly reviewed. Young people living in the home take fire safety seriously and play a compliant part in responding to regular fire testing and precautionary drills.

The home has protective and effective procedures in place for monitoring all visitors. No unauthorised person can access the building or young people living there. The Registered Manager confirmed that robust recruitment and selection procedures had been adopted by the company to select only those staff safe and competent to work with vulnerable young people.

The Registered Manager provided evidence of her evaluation of new staff and a verbal summary of the service's recruitment and selection process, confirming that no staff started working with children ahead of all necessary checks being completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All staff take responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of each young person's plan of care. Young people confirm through behaviour and improving levels of compliance that the relationships they develop with staff are helpful. The staff team actively involve and support young people in social and recreational activities outside of the home as much as possible. Young people's understanding of their behaviour is enhanced by having regular access to qualified therapists employed by the registered provider and mainstream mental health services.

The provision of education for young people is promoted through the provider's education policy and the home's established relationships with age appropriate local provision, for example, older teenagers can attend a local further education college. Young people, when in placement, are practically supported throughout the college day by residential staff who work in partnership with teachers to ensure that the educational timetable is achieved.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Individual care planning is effective because young people help, through their review process, to develop their placement plan which indicates how their placing authority's care plan will be implemented in practice. Case file recordings confirm that progress is reviewed within the statutory time frame.

Regular in-house meetings record and update the young person's plans and help to inform looked after children (LAC) reviews of the placement. Placement plans include summarised details of the young person's health plan and education package. Young people are supported to actively contribute to this process and have their views listened to and recorded.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with people important to them. Placement plans and case files record explicit authorised arrangements for contact between young people, their family, friends and professional workers such as social workers. The quality and appropriateness of contact is always evaluated to ensure that all arrangements are safe and in the young person's best interest.

Young people are actively encouraged to be involved with the every day decision-making process in the home. Young people have an active say about the running of their home. Key work sessions review personal issues such as confidentiality and how specific requests and feedback from young people can be acted upon in a safe and meaningful manner. Daily interactions between staff and young people reveal that the home is effective because it provides a structured yet relaxed setting where constructive dialogue with young people is the significant component for shaping the care being provided. Staff provide effective role modelling for young people, teaching safe and socially acceptable behaviour.

The day-to-day issues of young people are dealt with using a consistent, safety-conscious approach within clearly agreed and recorded parameters. Sessions with staff and case records

support the view that the home offers realistic yet firm boundaries that effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of individual young people in the home and the wider community. Young people generally respond cooperatively to this approach.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home helps prepare young people for eventually leaving care by introducing and practising the skills needed for adulthood as part of the everyday care provided. Requisite social and life skills are learnt through active participation in the tasks involved with the running of the home such as shopping, personal budgeting, cooking and undertaking daily household chores.

The children's home is set in an unobtrusive semi-detached house located in a large Shropshire village. It has access to most civil amenities, using reliable public transport or its own vehicle, to access nearby major towns. The house is suitably furnished and very well maintained throughout, showing no signs of deliberate damage and there is evidence of regular redecoration. Being a single occupancy home, there is ample space for resident young people to spread out and treat the accommodation as their home. The home has a private garden to the rear and sufficient off-road parking for staff cars and a private vehicle. The home has been well chosen in its discrete location and well-equipped for its particular care function.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations. Both the Statement of Purpose and the young person's guide have been amended to provide accurate and up-to-date information about what services are provided.

Young people living here are practically supported with every aspect of their daily living by the team of competent and qualified staff who effectively demonstrate their commitment to providing safe and consistent care. The experienced and qualified Registered Manager provides support through regular staff supervision and ensuring ongoing access to professional training. Staff have attended all statutory training and have attained or are embarked upon National Vocational Qualification training to help them provide the informed care required to meet young people's specific care needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is because there has been collective commitment by the staff team to fully understand, support and practically address the potentially harmful behaviours presented by young people. The home has a track record of consistently being successful in adapting to and managing such young people by shaping their service to address complex needs.

The duty rota for the home confirms that the complement of residential support staff, as identified by the home's Statement of Purpose, provides individualised care on a 2:1 ratio for young people. Any shortfalls are covered by house staff or known staff from another of the registered provider's homes to reduce the potential for any disruption to the young person's care routine or 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. 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. Young people's feedback effectively contributes to the home's quality monitoring systems and influences aspects of the service being provided. The future operation of the home is projected in an annual development plan that is subject to ongoing review.

Young people's comprehensive individual case files are safely stored and arranged in a manner that is familiar to the staff team while promoting confidentiality. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and can request access to them.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.