

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC373941
Inspection date	18/11/2010
Inspector	Liz Daniels
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	12/02/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 home is run by the local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people, who have suffered disruption in their lives and display difficult behaviour as a result.

It is a detached property set in a corner plot, in a residential part of the town. There is car parking for several vehicles to the front of the property and a large garden with a lawn and patio to the side and rear. The home has four single bedrooms and a sleep-in room for staff. A dining room, study and lounge all provide communal relaxation space and a conservatory provides an additional recreational area. In addition, there is a well-fitted kitchen and utility room as well as two bathrooms and a shower room.

There are currently three young people living in the home, all of whom were present for all or part of the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced inspection was the first to the home for the year April 2010 to March 2011, during which the key standards were inspected.

A new manager has been appointed and will soon be joining the home but excellent interim arrangements are in place until she takes up her post. A knowledgeable and experienced manager, who is registered to another setting, is currently on secondment to the home. She is supported by a very experienced deputy manager and an enthusiastic staff team. Staff promote good health and ensure young people's health needs are well met. They also work hard to provide a homely environment where there are lots of things for young people to do and where learning is encouraged. A range of activities and time with staff provide opportunities for young people to learn skills which will help them work towards independence and leaving care. Staff are well trained and excellent processes are in place to keep young people safe.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, the manager was asked to ensure that any fire doors that were held open would be able to self close in the event of a fire. Door guards that respond to the fire alarm have now been fitted making the environment safer for staff and young people.

Two recommendations were also made following the last inspection and these have been met. As a result most young people see their social worker soon after they return from unauthorised absence; this, or any reason why they may not, are now generally recorded. In addition, staff and young people are now involved in fire drills throughout the 24 hour period.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged to eat healthy and varied meals that meet their dietary needs. Menus reflect young people's choices and meals are happy, sociable occasions that enable staff and young people to chat together. Theme evenings, such as the recent medieval evening, are felt to be 'great fun' and provide the opportunity for young people to research and prepare different foods. 'Munch nights' are also proving to be very successful in enabling each young person to budget for, plan and prepare a meal of their choice for everyone. Plenty of food is available and fresh eggs from the home's chickens as well as home grown vegetables are enjoyed. Staff are trained in food hygiene, enabling them to prepare food safely.

The health information that staff gather informs them of young people's health needs and the care they need to provide. Staff promote good health by providing a healthy diet, encouraging exercise and enabling young people to access health professionals. Dental and optician appointments are made and staff accompany young people to them, if they prefer. Illnesses, accidents and injuries are very well recorded and body maps are well used as a record for any marks. Staff actively discourage smoking and substance misuse by setting clear boundaries; they are not allowed in the home but equally staff readily talk through the risks with young people as well as encourage them to access supportive clinics or networks to help them give up.

Medications and treatment are well stored and administered. As no young people currently require medication, records could not be fully inspected, but past practice has consistently been very good. Non-prescription medications are not kept in the home. Instead, staff encourage young people to seek advice from their General Practitioner or to speak with a local pharmacist regarding the most suitable treatment for minor ailments. The required consents are in place for emergency treatment and the administration of first aid. Staff are trained in first aid and well stocked first aid boxes are available in the home and company vehicle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff respect young people's privacy and are careful to maintain confidentiality when discussing them on the telephone or handling information about them. Wherever possible, a mixed staff group is on duty enabling sensitivity to gender issues. Young people can use their own mobile telephone or the home's cordless telephone to make calls in a private area of the home. There are robust policies for room

searching, entering of bedrooms or sharing of personal information; records and discussions confirm these are well managed.

Staff recognise that it is important for young people to raise their concerns and that they are supported to do so. Any concerns are taken seriously, investigated and acted upon. Records confirm that they are managed to a satisfactory outcome for young people. Formal or external complaints are investigated through the local authority complaints process. Similarly, staff are emphatic that they work hard to ensure a satisfactory outcome for the complainant; records confirm this. A monthly review of all complaints enables the manager to identify trends or themes as well as audit the process against the home's policy.

Staff are trained in child protection and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. The local safeguarding procedures are readily available in the home for staff to reference and an 'on-call' rota of senior managers provides additional support for staff on duty. A tight net nanny for the home's computers is supported by regular checks of their usage history by the local authority. In addition, sound recruitment policies protect young people by requiring that all staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure before employment. Vulnerable young people are identified and close liaison with other agencies involved in child protection ensures the staff do not work in isolation when putting strategies in place to protect them.

Staff regard bullying as unacceptable and excellent strategies to minimise the risk of it occurring are resulting in a very low incidence. Risk assessments underpin practice at the home; staff update them when there is an incident, to ensure it does not re-occur. Activities are well planned to ensure staff numbers are appropriate for those young people involved. Although young people at the home do not raise bullying as a concern they confirm that 'staff sort it out'. Staff are alert to intimidating behaviour and intervene promptly to de-escalate any situations.

The home's procedures and risk assessments are aimed at reducing the incidence of absence without permission as well as protecting young people who do go missing. In the event, absence is well recorded as events unfold and staff respond positively to them when they return. Young people's social workers are informed and the police involved when appropriate. Usually young people are seen by their social worker within 24 hours of their return but the representative of the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), who regularly visits the home, is also well known to them and can be contacted if they prefer. Excellent monitoring enables the manager to identify trends for each young person; these are then explored during key working sessions, as well as staff meetings, to inform risk assessments.

Staff encourage socially acceptable behaviour but are fair in the way they manage poor behaviour. They are trained in behaviour management and the use of an extensive reward system promotes a focus on positive behaviour. Sanctions are used appropriately, well recorded and monitored. Physical intervention is rarely used and only when essential to protect individuals; similarly, very good records are maintained. Young people confirm that they know there are consequences to unacceptable behaviour and that they understand why. They discuss it at their next

key worker session and are then asked to comment on how they feel about the incident as well as the way it was managed; the majority of comments confirm that they believe they have been treated fairly.

Excellent measures are undertaken to maintain the safety and security of the young people. The environment is well maintained, the organisation has public liability insurance and the required contracts are in place. Risk assessments that are completed for the premises, individual behaviours and activities also protect young people. Any shortfalls identified in the six monthly fire risk assessment are managed promptly. Regular checks of fire prevention equipment are undertaken and are very well recorded. Quarterly unannounced fire drills are carried out throughout the 24 hour period and good monitoring ensures they include all staff and young people over the year. Any new staff or young people are shown the fire alarm procedure; they also practise an evacuation so they are confident how to care for each other in the event of a fire.

Visitors and contractors are well vetted; they are required to show evidence of identification, to sign the visitors' book and are well supervised while on site. Similarly, a robust recruitment process is managed through the local authority in conjunction with senior staff; records to confirm that all the required information is received prior to staff employment are held at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent individual support and staff enable them to access professional services when they believe it will benefit them. Key worker sessions provide excellent opportunities for young people to discuss personal concerns with staff as well as focus on areas of life that they struggle with. Sessions are well recorded and actions are identified to support young people in moving forward. Equally young people confirm that they can share concerns with any member of staff. In addition, the regular visits of a representative from NYAS ensures young people know an independent person who they can contact about any personal problems or concerns. Activities are well considered to ensure that, whether as a group or individual, no young person becomes isolated. Similarly, the reward system is a popular way of acknowledging individual achievements as well as supporting young people to work on those areas of life that they find more difficult.

Education is promoted as valuable for young people and staff encourage them in their attendance. There are some excellent learning resources within the home and staff also promote any opportunities for learning. For example, a recent 'medieval night' provided a happy sociable occasion but also an opportunity for young people to research the history around it; similarly, a local castle trip was followed up by a quiz back at the home, for all to take part in. Staff endorse the 'Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN)'; they ensure that any learning opportunities are harnessed and young people record them appropriately, as ASDAN course work then benefits their GCSE work. The case worker for education, who co-

ordinates learning for young people in residential care, continues to be a valuable asset; she ensures those young people who struggle to be in full time education have additional education at home or an alternative learning programme that suits them as individuals. She also ensures that young people have a personal education plan.

Staff offer young people a range of activities and support them in pursuing any particular interests they may have. Games and pastimes are evident around the home but staff also support young people in applying for additional youth opportunity funding for particular projects. Funding for a large fish tank is the most recent success and it is hoped that swings in the garden will be possible. Keeping chickens, developing a wildlife pond and growing garden vegetables are all activities which staff and young people enjoy together. Equally trips out as well as visits to the gym and swimming pool are popular. Links with a local village of young people from overseas, continue to strengthen and plans to meet together again this Christmas time are underway. Young people continue to enthusiastically produce their bi-monthly magazine about life at the home and photos of activities with descriptions of events are also being collated into a scrapbook for young people to enjoy. Equally staff recognise that young people sometimes need to have time alone to pursue their individual interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed and a placement plan developed through the looked after child framework. This underpins the home's comprehensive care plan, health plan and risk assessments for each young person. Key workers regularly review the plans and any changes are discussed with the appropriate social worker. The plans are also discussed as part of staff supervision with the deputy manager and monitored as part of the home's quality assurance. Staff confirm that they talk about the young people at staff meetings, so all are aware of any changes to their plans. Equally, any changes are shared with the young person during one-to-one time; the detail of these discussions is well recorded. Similarly, staff confirm that individual time with any of the team can be used for a young person to seek guidance, support or advice.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed at their looked after child review twice yearly, in the light of their care and progress at the home. The process includes key staff, family members (if appropriate) and other professionals involved with the young person. The views of young people are sought before the review so that staff can advocate for them but they are also encouraged to attend, to voice their choices and aspirations. All the appropriate paperwork is held in each young person's file, which staff support them to access and read if they wish.

Contact arrangements are very well managed. Staff support young people to maintain as much contact as possible whilst following the arrangements agreed at their review. Very good records are held whereby the progress and frequency can be

well monitored. Equally staff are aware of the adverse effects that contact may have on young people and support them well.

The home's policies and procedures are aimed at ensuring young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Admissions to the home are planned and emergency admissions avoided unless absolutely necessary for a young person's welfare. As there have been no recent admissions to the home the process for this could not be fully inspected. However, discussions about a possible admission highlighted the number of considerations staff reflect on; they advocate that a young person is unsuitable if they are likely to cause an unacceptable level of disruption to the progress of those young people already in the home. Similarly staff work hard to ensure young people are well prepared for leaving the home; a young person who left recently was very well supported and experienced a smooth transition into semi-independent living.

Young people are encouraged to make choices and decisions about their lives and they influence the way the home is run. One-to-one time provides an opportunity for them to discuss any specific concerns or ideas and equally, house meetings are a popular forum they use to share their views. They confirm that they are 'happy to tell staff - they listen and will do something about it'. In addition, staff now report 'a much closer working relationship' with social workers, since actively seeking their views about how the home is run, as well as including them in team meetings and 'munch nights'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

One young person is eligible for a pathway plan and is now working with a leaving care social worker. But very good steps are being taken to enable those who are younger to learn life skills that will benefit them and help them prepare for leaving care. Each has their own bank account which their reward money is paid into; staff support them in learning how to manage the account as well as how to save some money. They are involved in many opportunities around the home such as helping with the cooking, their laundry and room tidying. One staff member explained that the geraniums on the conservatory window-sill had just been brought in from outside; this had been an afternoon's activity which, although spontaneous, the young people had greatly enjoyed doing.

The setting provides a pleasant, comfortable home which is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. The house is a large detached property with a good sized garden, situated in a residential area within easy reach of shops and facilities. Set back from the road, there is space for several cars to park by the house and a large enclosed area to the back of the home provides a safe recreational space for young people. The exterior of the property is in a good state of structural and decorative repair. Internally there is a large lounge and a smaller sitting room which is used as a study and education area; both are appropriately furnished and enable group or individual activities. A conservatory also provides a quieter space where

staff and young people can chat together or relax. In addition, a good sized kitchen and dining area provide space for meal preparation and for all to eat together. Each young person has their own bedroom which is personalised to suit them.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose reflects how the setting operates, how young people will be cared for and what services they can expect. A young people's guide is also available and provides a very useful précis in a format which is appropriate for young people.

The home has gone through considerable staff changes over the last few months, but an experienced deputy manager has continued to lead the staff team in providing a high standard of care for young people throughout the interim period. In addition a manager, registered to another setting, has been seconded to take responsibility for the home, providing knowledgeable leadership for the team. These excellent interim arrangements have ensured the young people have been very well looked after. A new manager has recently been appointed; the current manager will remain on secondment until she joins the home in early January 2011. Sufficient staff are employed to meet young people's needs and the ongoing training opportunities ensures they continue to develop their skills. Regular staff meetings and thorough handovers contribute to effective team work which enables consistency in the care of young people. All the permanent staff are trained in a National Vocational Qualification for the care of children and young people at level 3, or its equivalent. Staff have regular supervision which they regard as a positive opportunity to discuss situations at work and their own professional development.

Staff employ excellent quality assurance processes to monitor the care of young people and the home's performance against its Statement of Purpose. All the appropriate records are reviewed monthly and signed. Comprehensive reporting enables the frequency of events and any trends to be identified. Visits to comply with Regulation 33 are undertaken and reports developed which guide staff on any areas for development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff explore the individual personal, social, health and emotional needs of each young person and provide individualised care to meet them. The home celebrates festivals and explores cultural dishes and themes. Young people are treated fairly and with dignity. They take part in the community and exert choices within their lives in the home.

Each young person's file is a permanent record of their history and progress that is stored securely. It can be accessed and read by the young people with staff support.