

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC407430
Inspection date	1 September 2010
Inspector	Jennifer Reed
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	22 April 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 home is one of four children's homes operated by the organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender, aged from 10 to 17 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home provides a high intervention service which offers structured placements of nine months duration. Staffing levels are provided to meet the identified needs of accommodated young people. The home is situated in a rural area, with grounds and outbuildings covering five acres. The house offers single room accommodation for each young person.

Educational provision is arranged and overseen by the headteacher of the company's nearby school. Young people receive tuition in dedicated schoolrooms adjacent to the main house.

Summary

This was the first inspection of the home which focused on how the home is meeting the key national minimum standards for children's homes and the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The inspection was unannounced and undertaken over a two day period. One young person was present in the home and contributed to the inspection process.

The home was registered with Ofsted on the 22 April 2010 and commenced operation on the 12 July 2010. The findings of this inspection are based on limited evidence from the home's first seven weeks of running a high intervention service.

Young people benefit from the company's knowledge, experience and current management of three other children's homes in the local area. This new service is underpinned by the company's established policies, procedures, systems and staff training programme. The senior management within the company provide rigorous oversight of the home's developing service and the daily care and support given to young people; this helps keep young people safe. In particular, the registered person demonstrates vigilance and a strong commitment to the development of the service to provide exemplary care within the home, which contributes to safeguarding and promoting young people's welfare. The main house provides high quality accommodation for young people to live in. Most of the outbuilding accommodation is 'work in progress' to develop specific leisure and activity based areas. Staffing of the home is yet to be consolidated to provide young people with a stable and consistent staff team of experienced and qualified workers. Shortfalls in the staffing establishment have impacted on some areas of the home's operation.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Hygiene standards within the home are high, and contribute to providing young people with a healthy living environment. Staff are trained in food hygiene and the home adheres to safe food handling and storage practice. The kitchen is well equipped and both the kitchen and dining room are equipped with tables and chairs for meals to be taken at. Staff are adept at helping young people to develop their social and communication skills at mealtimes and young people enjoy taking part in these social occasions.

Clear health policies guide staff in providing young people with well balanced meals which promote healthy eating. Young people's food intake is closely monitored and recorded, ensuring that staff can be proactive in helping young people to consume a nutritious diet. For example, the home has an incentive scheme which encourages young people to eat five helpings of fruit and vegetables each day. Young people's food preferences and tastes are taken into account and they are involved in menu planning. The young people's behavioural programme includes substantial opportunities for them to prepare and cook snacks and meals. Young people are making good progress in developing their culinary skills.

The good range of health policies and the comprehensive systems set up in the home support staff in meeting the health needs of young people. Each young person is registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician and the home makes sure that they receive these medical health checks. The home has already established links with some specialist medical services to provide young people with the advice, diagnosis and treatment that has been needed to promote their welfare. The home seeks the necessary permissions from persons with parental responsibility to make certain young people receive prompt medical treatment when required. Staff complete training in first aid and accidents and injuries are well dealt with, ensuring young people receive any necessary emergency treatment they may need to promote their good health.

Detailed health plans and a health passport are drawn up for each accommodated young person. These records identify individual health needs, immunisations and treatment, providing an accurate medical history which contributes to promoting young people's good health and well-being. Clear records are also maintained to monitor the administration and keeping of all medication. Young people's welfare is further promoted by the arrangements in place for the safe disposal of any unused medication and the provision of secure cabinets for the safe storage of all medicines within the home. The company's training programme includes instruction for staff in the safe handling and administration of medication to young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home's well developed practice and recording systems, underpinned by the company's established policies and procedural guidance, support staff in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities to young people. The vigilant and rigorous oversight of senior managers has contributed to promoting young people's welfare during these first few weeks of the home's operation in providing a new service to young people. Young people's comprehensive placement plans provide clear guidance to members of staff about how to best deliver individualised care, to promote young people's welfare and help to keep them safe. The home is yet to establish a consistent staff team to look after accommodated young people.

Young people's welfare is protected by the home's satisfactory policies, systems and records in place to address complaints, safeguarding and bullying issues, unauthorised absences, notifications and behaviour management. Some of these processes have already been tested

by presenting issues within the home. For example, three complaints have been made and these have been taken seriously and looked into by the management within policy timescales; one matter is not yet concluded. A number of restraints have been undertaken and these actions have been closely monitored by senior staff, to check that each was a necessary measure to minimise risk and keep people safe. Restraints are recorded in a dedicated book; however, the quality of recording is variable. This shortfall has been highlighted by the management with staff and further guidance has been provided to support staff in this aspect of their work.

The home has been very successful in ensuring that young people are not absent without authority; there have been no occurrences of young people being missing from this home. Records show that the home promptly reports serious incidents to the relevant authorities and agencies. The home's highly structured daily programme for young people provides them with a clear understanding of expectations of behaviour and defines boundaries. The programme and incentives used in the home encourage young people to make changes in their behaviour and young people respond well to the deserved praise they receive from staff in response to their achievements.

All new staff employed to work within the home have completed induction child protection and behaviour management/control and restraint training, to raise their awareness and understanding of child protection issues. Longer term staff benefit from regular safeguarding training. The home knows how to deal with and respond to arising child protection matters and staff work proactively with other safeguarding agencies and services to keep young people safe from harm. Senior management have provided strong support to the newly formed staff team, and have robustly responded to presenting safeguarding issues, demonstrating that young people's welfare and safety is seen as a priority in all aspects of the home's functioning. Bullying is not tolerated within the home and young people are made aware of the home's policy and approach to bullying issues on admission.

Young people are given sufficient privacy within the home. Their privacy is protected by the policies, procedures and care practices within the home. Furthermore, young people each have their own bedroom and there is adequate communal space within the home, for young people to privately meet with their friends and family. In accordance with their care plans, young people may be able to make telephone calls in private. Confidential matters are adequately managed and staff know how to share information for child protection purposes. All records are securely stored within the home.

Young people's welfare is promoted by the home's comprehensive risk assessments for fire, activities, premises and presenting behaviour, which are completed to assess the likelihood and the level of estimated risk to the health and safety of young people. Risk assessments are continually updated in response to arising issues. The company has undertaken robust health and safety checks to ensure the suitability of the premises and the provision of a safe environment for young people and staff to live within. All of the required utilities checks have been completed and the home has public liability insurance. The home has carried out two fire drills, one during the day and one at night, to ensure staff and young people know how to safely evacuate the building in an emergency.

Personnel files were inspected for all staff working in this home. The records show that the company robustly follows safer recruitment and selection guidelines for the employment of all new staff, ensuring that all necessary checks and processes are made prior to appointment.

Senior management take great care in carrying out the rigorous checking and accuracy of all information, including making checks with the driving vehicle licence agency to ensure staff are safe to drive the home's vehicles and safely transport accommodated young people. The company has established close working relationships with recruitment agencies to ensure that any agency staff employed to work within the home are suitably qualified and experienced to effectively and safely undertake this work. The home makes its own checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for agency workers employed in group homes and also has a rolling programme to renew employed workers CRB disclosures every three years. This is exceptionally good practice and clearly demonstrates the home's commitment to safeguarding young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All young people work within the home's structured programme. Nevertheless, placement plans and care practices reflect the individuality of young people and the home ensures that each young person receives the support and care that they require to meet their identified needs. The home advocates on behalf of young people to ensure that they can access and receive specialist services which promote their good health and well-being.

Support work and care practices within the home are influenced by attachment theory. The structured programme gives young people a predictable pattern to their daily life, where expectations and boundaries are clearly defined and uncertainties are reduced, helping them to feel safe. However, management have noted that care practices within the home are not always consistent. Nevertheless, the home has been very successful in stopping young people's absences without authority and increasing school attendance. Young people say they can speak with preferred members of staff about any concerns they may have and they are confident that these staff members listen to them.

The home completes an exit folder for young people when they are discharged from the home; this contains key information to help the young person successfully move on.

Young people are provided with tuition in the classroom building, adjacent to the main house. The company's school provides teaching staff and the headteacher oversees the arrangements for the education of young people accommodated in this home. Young people benefit from core teaching in literacy and numeracy and from receiving individual attention or alternatively, working within a very small group. The home is developing further rooms, for example, an art and crafts room, for young people to work within.

The home provides a range of books and games which young people can access in accordance with the structured programme. The outbuildings house a home cinema, a Wii-fit room and an activities room; not all are yet ready for young people to use and enjoy. The home has identified the need to ensure that young people take sufficient exercise and young people are encouraged to participate in country walks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The home provides detailed placement plans which are congruent with the local authority care plans and objectives for the young people accommodated. Placement plans provide staff with clear guidance on how best to look after each young person and how to implement their daily

structured programme. Placement plans are updated as required to incorporate new decisions and changes to care practices.

In this early stage of development, only initial reviews have taken place following the admission of young people to the home. To date, young people have moved into the home from other group homes within the company and there has not been a new admission from outside of the company. The home's policy is to carry out at least a paper-based assessment prior to any new admission, to ensure that young people are appropriately placed and the home is suitable to meet their needs. Once in placement, young people and staff complete a daily report of the young person's day; this record helps review the implementation of the plan and lets young people know how well they are doing in the completion of their programme.

Clear contact details and agreed contact arrangements are included in placement plans, ensuring that young people's welfare is safeguarded. There is sufficient space within the home for young people to meet with their families and visitors in private.

Young people's house meetings are held which offer young people the opportunity to contribute their views, voice their opinions about the running of the home and say how well they are being looked after. Young people know how to use the home's complaint process to raise any issues of concern that they may have about their care. However, there are limited opportunities within the structured programme for young people to make choices and changes to agreed practices. For example, the high intervention programme prohibits young people spending time in the community during the first six months of their placement; the exceptions being if they are going out to attend necessary appointments or go on walks or educational trips with members of staff. Nevertheless, young people are included in menu planning and when they have successfully completed set modules of the programme, they will be able to make choices in the personalisation of their bedrooms. The programme encourages young people to participate in the development of the home and young people have begun to build a fenced area for the keeping of chickens.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people placed in the home take part in the home's high intervention programme and they are not specifically working within their pathway plans at this stage of their lives. However, the structured programme provides opportunities for young people to develop some independent living skills which will support them as they move towards adulthood.

The main house provides young people with high quality accommodation. It is a two storey farmhouse, set within five acres of well tended grounds; there are a number of outbuildings. The home is located in a rural setting; it has no near neighbours, nor does its location provide young people with easy access to local facilities.

The home is furnished, decorated and maintained to a high standard, providing a comfortable and homely environment for young people to live in. It is kept clean and it is well organised. Young people have their own bedroom; these vary considerably in size. However, all are well furnished and provide young people with sufficient storage and hanging space. The home provides separate sleeping and bathroom accommodation for two members of staff on duty at night. There are sufficient bathroom and toilet facilities for the accommodation of four young people, and there is enough space within the communal areas of the home for everyone when

the home is working at maximum capacity. Young people say they enjoy living in this home and they particularly like the farmhouse style kitchen and the silence at night.

A minimal level of work is continuing within the house to attend to a few minor problems which have been identified since the home has become operational. The various outbuildings in the grounds of the home are still at different stages of development and work is in progress to provide a range of activity and leisure based facilities adjacent to the main house. However, work on one part of an outbuilding has been completed to provide classroom accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose has been recently written for this new service. It identifies the aims and objectives of the service and comprehensively describes how the home functions. It is available on request to placing authorities, young people and their parents. The young people's guide also provides relevant information about how the home is run.

The home works within the company's well established policies, procedures and systems which are regularly reviewed and updated to provide sound care practices to accommodated young people. The home is well organised and senior staff and the directors are vigilant in their management oversight of the home's initial period of operation. The registered person and Registered Manager are closely monitoring the home's new high intervention programme to evaluate its effectiveness and to identify if any changes in practice may need to be made to further benefit young people. The company demonstrates a strong commitment and enthusiasm to looking after young people well and to the continuing improvement and development of the service.

All new staff complete a comprehensive induction programme and complete a six month probationary period. Thereafter, foundation training in core work areas and regular update training is provided to staff. However, a minimum ratio of 80% of staff employed within the home have not achieved their National Vocational Qualification award at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and the home has not reached the 80% minimum ratio of qualification. Furthermore, the home is yet to establish a consistent staff team to look after the accommodated young people, despite management's efforts to provide a dedicated team of workers. Unforeseen external circumstances have led to some staff members leaving and the home's staffing has been supplemented by company workers deployed from other homes, and the use of sessional and agency staff. The registered person, Registered Manager and the designated head of care are robustly supporting staff at present. Staff have received regular supervision. However, staffing difficulties have adversely impacted on some aspects of the home's operation. For example, a shift leader has been left in charge of the home whilst still working within their probationary period.

The Registered Manager is also a director of the company and it was clearly stated at the registration of the home that this arrangement would only be in place in the short term. The company has identified another person to be appointed as the Registered Manager of the home; Ofsted are yet to be notified of the start date of this appointment.

Established quality assurance systems ensure the regular review and evaluation of the standard of care provided to young people and helps to promote their welfare. The Registered Manager's first monthly monitoring report provides good detail and analysis, evidencing rigorous oversight

through the identification of errors and shortfalls in service provision. The registered person regularly checks written records within the home. However, the first regulatory monthly report completed by the visitor did not clearly raise any identified concerns or recommendations for improvement.

The home's records and documentation provide a satisfactory framework to record a young person's development and progress. However, the quality of some recording within the home's written records is very variable.

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
29	ensure at all times, that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25.1)	30 September 2010
34	give notice to Ofsted of the appointment of a person to manage the children's home; in particular, to include the name of the person and the date on which the appointment is to take effect. (Regulation 7(2)(a)(b))	30 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- consider the way the home functions and enhances every young person's independence and opportunity to make everyday choices (NMS 8.9)
- ensure that staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leader of staff shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home, are not themselves temporary staff, and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods (NMS 29.3)
- ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification level 3 award in the Caring for Children and Young People within the next 12 month period (NMS 29.5)
- provide staff, who do not already have the necessary skills, with access to programmes of training which addresses the issues detailed in Appendix 2; in particular, post-induction training in recording skills (NMS 31.5)
- ensure recommendations or issues of concern are raised in regulation 33 reports to enable the registered person to take action. (NMS 32.3)