

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC375540
Inspection date	21 October 2009
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	9 February 2009
--------------------------------	-----------------

© Crown copyright 2009

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

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people, from 12 years to 17 years old, of either gender. The home provides care and accommodation to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties on a long term basis. It is located in a residential area and provides good access to public transport, shops, healthcare, education and leisure facilities.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection to check the home's capacity to meet the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and organisation. Previous actions made at the last inspection were also checked.

The service provides satisfactory outcomes for young people with good features in enjoying and achieving. Young people live in a settled, homely and inviting environment. They have a positive relationship with staff and as a result, present few behaviour management issues. Staff satisfactorily promote young people's health, education, safety and welfare. Young people have a say in decisions about their lives and the running of the home. Key weaknesses are identified in the promotion of independence, the poor systems to notify Ofsted about significant incidents and aspects of management monitoring.

A new manager was appointed to the home on 1 April 2009. Ofsted were advised and informed by the service that an application for the manager to register would be submitted. This has not been done.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the registered person was required to improve practice to ensure that sanctions and restraint records complied with the regulations and ensure that 80% of staff attain the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Evidence from this inspection demonstrates that these actions have been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Most young people eat a healthy, balanced diet to promote their good health. Most are involved in menu planning and have a choice of meals, including a choice of take-away meals once a week. Young people are involved in shopping and meal preparations. They confirm that they get enough to eat and drink and say that vegetables are always available. Young people also have access to the fruit bowl, which is well stocked. However, it is not clear how staff actively encourage young people who do not eat regular balanced meals, for example, young people who frequently go missing from the home. This is an area that is not prioritised.

Young people's health needs are identified and they are referred to services to promote their good health. They are registered with health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and

optician. Young people who need emotional support get this. A clinical psychologist from the organisation advises and supports staff on how to manage the needs of young people who may self-harm or have other issues that may impact on their mental health. Staff also have a good relationship with the local doctor, who is available to consult with them about any health issues. Young people confirm that they are supported when they feel unwell. They have health plans and the looked after children's nurse undertakes health needs assessments. Immunisations are recorded as appropriate. Staff accompany young people to health appointments and respect their right to be seen alone by a medical professional. Records of the outcome of medical appointments are maintained. Smoking is discouraged. Some staff are trained in smoke cessation and talk to young people about the dangers of smoking. Sexual health and hygiene promotion issues are discussed with young people. This ensures they are aware about the issues and can make informed choices and protect themselves.

There are systems in place to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication. Medical consents are in place and records are up to date and in order. Staff are appropriately trained. However, the medication policy has not been implemented. This is being addressed by the service. The manager has not monitored medication as part of their management role.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected most of the time. Young people have their own room and key. Young people sign up to a room search contract to agree to staff searching their room if it is suspected that they may be storing items that may impact on their health and safety. There is a system to record these searches. Young people can use the phone in private and get their own mail. Information about young people is maintained in a secure environment. However, there is an ongoing issue when staff go shopping for food and necessities. They have to purchase items using purchase orders and not cash. This is institutional practice and can be embarrassing for young people accompanying staff.

Young people are aware of the complaints procedure. One complaint made since the last inspection was investigated to its outcome. This was checked out with the young person to ensure their satisfaction.

Young people are safeguarded by local policies and procedures, staff training and contacts with relevant agencies. This ensures staff know what action to take when there are safeguarding concerns. Strategy meetings are convened and planned to address safeguarding issues, such as children who go missing regularly and behaviours that lead young people to be at risk of sexual exploitation. However, Ofsted have not been notified about strategy meetings that have already taken place or of other notifiable incidents. This is unsatisfactory practice.

Young people are protected from bullying. The home has a zero-tolerance policy implemented in practice and monitored. This is made known to young people. Some young people who have been bullied say that when this has happened, staff dealt with it.

Young people who go missing are protected by missing from home procedures. Staff are aware of their duties when young people go missing. Staff ask young people where they are going or have been and will contact young people on their mobile phones when they are missing. Staff make a record of what young people are wearing and some staff make a record of young people's presentation on their return. However, there is no proactive strategy to address the

behaviour of young people who go missing that is included in their placement plan and which makes clear the action to be taken, giving consideration to young people's legal status or indicating how young people will be prevented from leaving the home.

Staff encourage young people to have socially acceptable behaviour. Most staff are trained in behaviour management and have developed safe boundaries with young people. Staff talk to the young people with respect and are able to reason with them when their behaviour is not appropriate. The positive relationships between staff and young people means that there has been no need for staff to use restraint techniques. Behaviour incentives are promoted. Sanctions are agreed with young people and form part of their placement plans. This is positive and enables young people to take responsibility for their behaviour. Staff record sanctions in a bound book. Young people have an opportunity to comment. However, the appropriateness of sanctions have not been checked by the manager.

Health and safety and young people's individual risk assessments on their activities do not consistently show how some risks will be minimised. Fire checks are undertaken and involve the young people. However, protection from smoking in bedrooms is not thoroughly addressed in this document. The organisation has been instructed that fire drills are to take place twice a year. This does not comply with the national minimum standards and regulations.

Visitors are properly supervised and monitored. Staff Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are verified by the manager. However, gaps in the CRB renewal process promotes unsafe practice. Systems have been put in place and the service is addressing this matter.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are supported by staff and key workers who meet with them regularly and monitor their progress. Young people are also supported by workers from other agencies. For example, social workers, health professionals, leaving care, education, youth offending team and safeguarding teams. Young people get individual support when they need it.

Staff value the importance of a good education and promote this with young people. All young people of school age attend some form of education. Most young people are making good progress and they are recognised for their achievements. Some young people are involved in work placements and staff continue to encourage young people to pursue their goals and aim high. There is good support from the education team and staff monitor school attendance. Some young people comment that they value their input. Staff maintain good contact with schools and colleges to ensure they are up to date with young people's progress and can support them. Young people have their own laptops to enable them to do school work or leisure activities. Some staff have had training on personal education plans. However, not all young people of school age have implemented plans to support their education.

Activities are actively promoted by the home. Young people are involved in individual and group activities, for example, swimming, horse riding, dancing, bowling and cinema. Young people went on their summer holiday to a seaside resort and they celebrate birthday events in the home, inviting friends and family. This promotes an environment that is socially inclusive.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people living at the home are settled. However, it is not clear when they move in, how the needs of young people and the likely effects of their admission on the existing group of young people are taken into account. This is pertinent for young people who have specific needs that most staff are not trained to meet.

Information provided by placing social workers inform placements. However, some of the information provided is limited. Placement plans have been developed by the home. These are comprehensive and demonstrate how most care needs will be met. Equality and diversity considerations are identified. Clear contact arrangements are in place. This helps young people to maintain contact with their families and significant others. However, there are some omissions relating to specific needs, which may lead to some reactive staff practices. The home is addressing this. Young people have not signed to agree the content of their plans. Monthly summaries are good and demonstrate the progress that young people are making. The summaries are child centred and allow staff to work alongside the young people's placement plans. Young people's care plans are regularly reviewed through the statutory review process. Young people are consulted prior to these meetings and can attend to express their views.

Young people have opportunities to be involved in some of the day to day decisions made in the home. This includes the change made to the name of the home. Young people are also involved in regular house meetings, key work sessions and informal discussions with staff. These are active methods to ensure that young people's voices are listened to and acted on.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is an inviting and homely environment. It is clean, decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard and is respected by the young people who live there. Young people have communal and private space and they have their own rooms. Most of the rooms are decorated to suit young people's individual tastes. Young people have electrical equipment in their rooms, such as televisions and DVDs. They also have their own safe where they can store their valuables.

Not all young people who are reaching care leaving age have a pathway plan. The services to assist young people to acquire skills for independence are limited or some young people refuse to engage. It is therefore not possible to establish young people's progress and ensure they are well supported and prepared. Staff attempt to engage with young people to ensure they are developing some independence skills. However, without pathways plans, it is not clear how this can be realistically assessed.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Evidence in all outcome areas demonstrates that most young people's individual needs are met by the home. Staff understand their responsibility to ensure young people are supported. They also promote understanding and knowledge by having regular themed nights. However, not all staff have had equality and diversity training.

The manager has been in post for over six months and an application to register with Ofsted has still not been received. This was an assurance given by the service when the manager was appointed.

The home has reviewed the statement of purpose to reflect the services provided by the home. However, the document has not been approved by elected members. Young people have a copy of the child friendly guide. This includes information about the complaints procedure and how they can contact Ofsted.

Young people are looked after by experienced and skilled staff who understand their roles and responsibilities. They are well retained and familiar to the young people. Staff sickness and absence is covered by casual or agency staff who young people are familiar with. Staff are regularly supervised and their development is reviewed. They have a range of training opportunities available to them. Over 80% of staff have attained the National Vocational Training (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. However, not all staff are trained to meet the needs of young people who present specific needs. The home is addressing this; however, this is reactive practice that does not benefit young people.

The manager has been monitoring the quality of care since July 2009. The checks are not detailed as stand alone documents or robust and there is some missing information that has not been checked, such as medication, sanctions and restraints. A significant incident that was not notified to Ofsted and occurred in October was recorded in the monitoring undertaken in September. This practice does not provide an accurate picture of how the home performs against the statement of purpose and Children's Homes Regulations. This means that the current method used to monitor the quality of care is unsatisfactory. Regulation 33 visits take place and an action plan is developed that the manager responds to. However, the reports do not show how staff and young people are consulted about their experiences at the home. This would allow the visitor to form an opinion of the standards of care. These reports are submitted to Ofsted.

Young people's files are satisfactorily maintained. Files are audited and agencies are chased up to supply key information. This ensures that staff have all of the information they need to care for young people.

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
10	ensure that all young people are actively encouraged to eat regular, healthy balanced meals (Regulation 11)	30 November 2009
9	ensure that the arrangements to promote young people's dignity and privacy when purchasing food and necessities for their daily living are resolved (Regulation 11)	30 November 2009
20	ensure significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are appropriately notified to Ofsted (Regulation 30)	30 November 2009

2	ensure all young people know the overall content of their placement plan, according to their level of understanding (Regulation 12)	20 November 2009
6	ensure that all young people preparing to leave care have a pathway plan (Regulation 11)	30 November 2009
31	ensure additional training is provided to staff with respect to working with young people with specific needs (Regulation 27(4)(a))	13 November 2009
33	ensure regular, robust monitoring and clear management overview of all care practices within the home, including the monitoring of medication, sanctions and restraints (Regulation 34)	30 November 2009
34	ensure the manager registers with Ofsted. (Regulation 7)	30 November 2009

Recommendations

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

- implement agreed measures in placement plans to show how young people who go missing may be prevented from leaving the home (NMS 19.8)
- review risk assessments to ensure they demonstrate how risks will be minimised (NMS 26.2)
- ensure that at least four fire drills, including evacuation of staff and children from the building and fire drills held at night, take place in a 12 month period, and are recorded (NMS 26.8)
- obtain copies of the personal education plans (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that both the needs of the young people concerned, and the likely effects on his/her admission upon the existing group of young people, are taken into account and recorded, in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- make arrangements to ensure that the statement of purpose is formally approved by elected members (NMS 1)
- provide an opportunity for any young people or member of staff to meet with the Regulation 33 visitor. (NMS 32.2)