

Inspection report for children's home

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC033634
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 July 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Sharon Lloyd
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Date of last inspection</b>	30 March 2009
--------------------------------	---------------

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](http://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 home is a purpose built residential centre for children. This home is a large, detached, two storey building situated on a housing estate on the outskirts of town. Transport, education, health, leisure and employment facilities are available within the location of the home.

There are three separate living units on the premises. One unit is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people, aged from eight years old up to 17 years old, who have a learning or physical disability. This is situated on the ground floor at the rear of the building. There are two large lounges, one of which has a dining area. There is a separate kitchen and a playroom with access to a secure play area. Toilets and bathing facilities are sufficient in number to accommodate both sexes and to meet their individual needs. The home currently provides care and accommodation for one resident young person and approximately 20 children and young people who come to the centre for short breaks.

Two further units provide care and accommodation for children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, including those who present volatile and challenging behaviour. One unit is based on the first floor and caters for up to six young people from eight years old up to 17 years old. The accommodation includes a lounge, kitchen, separate toilet and shower facilities and individual bedrooms as well as a staff office and sleep-in room. Another unit caters for four children and young people from the ages of eight years old up to 17 years old. Two of these may be emergency or short term placements lasting a maximum of 12 weeks. There are additional facilities for young people who are preparing for independent living to practice self care skills and to live semi-independently. These include two lounges and small kitchens on the ground floor. Two further units are no longer operating and are not included in the home's registration. However, at the time of this inspection, a young person was living independently, with limited support in one of these units.

### Summary

A review of the local authority children's homes is being conducted during July and August 2009 and is due to report in September 2009. It is anticipated that by then the local authority will be in a position to decide how to best meet the needs of the young people who currently live at or have short stays at this home.

Eight young people currently live in the home. Approximately 20 more have regular short stays. Five young people contributed to the inspection, which took place unannounced over two days. The home was assessed against all key national minimum standards.

The standard of care throughout the home is variable. There are some good and satisfactory practices that promote young people's welfare but these are not consistently applied and there are shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards and Children's Homes Regulations.

There have been some improvements since the last inspection but the home continues to provide an inadequate standard of care because shortfalls in practice means that the health, welfare and safety of children and young people are compromised. Some young people receive a very good level of support in preparing for independent living, but this is not consistent and some young people receive an inadequate level of support in this area. Placement planning for

young people moving into the home is inadequate so that young people's needs are not fully addressed in the early stages of their placement.

Support with enjoying and achieving is satisfactory with some very good features. Children and young people are provided with opportunities to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to the community. They report that they feel safe in the home and have good relationships with the staff team. Children and young people like living at the home and are anxious about the future.

The premises do not provide homely accommodation. Monitoring of the operation of the home and of children and young people's welfare is not good enough to ensure the delivery of the best possible care. A temporary manager is in post but is not yet registered with Ofsted. Whilst he is child focused and competent in many areas, he is not sufficiently trained and supported as a new manager, to ensure the home is organised in a way that provides high quality care and meets the diverse and complex needs of all the children and young people.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Nine actions were raised following the last inspection. Improvements have been made to the decoration of the home and much of the graffiti has been removed. However, the home does not provide domestic style accommodation and some parts are in need of renovation. The local authority appreciates that the home is no longer fit for purpose and has begun a review of the service with the intention of providing an improved and more homely environment for children and young people to live in. The action to ensure the home is fit for purpose is repeated.

Although staff have been trained in the administration of medication, minor shortfalls in recording remain. The quality of health plans is variable. This means that some young people do not have comprehensive, up to date health plans that address all their health needs. This action is repeated.

Staff know that they cannot use restraint to prevent young people from leaving the premises. However, the restraint records show that restraint has been used to enforce compliance and a further action regarding the use of restraint is made. The recording of complaints is improved but shortfalls remain and the home cannot demonstrate that the complaints procedure is sufficiently robust to protect children and young people. This action is repeated.

All health and safety checks on the premises have been carried out. However, recruitment procedures and fire safety procedures are not sufficiently robust to ensure children and young people are adequately safeguarded.

A temporary manager is in post and has submitted a Registered Manager application to Ofsted.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is inadequate.

There are good medication procedures and good health plans for some children and young people. However, shortfalls in medicine administration records and procedures means that the home cannot show that all children and young people are receiving the medication they need

as and when they need it. Some health plans do not contain information about children and young people's health history, including their vaccination history, so the home cannot ensure that their health needs are being fully met.

Young people preparing for independent living prepare their own meals without supervision. They have not attended training in food hygiene, so the home is not ensuring that young people know how to prepare and store food safely.

The provision of nutritious and well balanced meals is inconsistent across the home. Some children and young people receive a good standard of well prepared and varied meals, including meals from other cultures. Others receive a variable standard of meals. Some staff sit with children and young people so that mealtimes are enjoyable, social occasions. However, on one unit, there are insufficient dining chairs for children, young people and staff to sit together for meals and mealtimes are irregular. This means that some children and young people do not enjoy mealtimes that are social, well-managed occasions and do not receive a sufficiently nutritious diet.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Staff follow good procedures for the safekeeping of confidential information. They respect the privacy and dignity of children and young people and follow good procedures in delivering personal care where necessary.

Allegations and disclosures of abuse are dealt with promptly, although they are not always resolved within 28 days. The home works effectively with the local authority safeguarding unit and the police to promote the welfare of children and young people. Parents, children and young people know how to make a complaint and most are confident that the home will address any issues raised. A complaints file is maintained within the home showing details of steps taken to address complaints, although planning and decision making is not always clearly evident. One complaint made has been misfiled and has not been addressed. A log of complaints is not kept. This impedes effective monitoring and puts children and young people at risk of poor quality care.

The home has an anti-bullying policy, known to staff. Children and young people report that incidents of bullying sometimes occur and they are not confident that staff can protect them appropriately. Despite this, children and young people report that they feel safe in the home and can approach staff with any matters of concern. The home has begun to use a restorative justice approach to incidents between young people with some limited success to date. This is because not all young people affected by an incident have been involved in the restorative justice conference. This means they are therefore not engaged in the process and are not convinced that matters have been dealt with fairly.

Although good procedures are in place to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people, these are not consistently applied and this compromises the home's ability to safeguard children and young people. For example, whilst effective measures are in place to promote the welfare of those who are missing from home, significant events are not always notified to the relevant authorities. This means that external monitoring of the home's response to incidents does not routinely take place. For example, Ofsted has not always been notified

when the police have been called to the home. This impedes Ofsted from effectively exercising its regulatory auditing and safeguarding function.

The employment of effective behaviour management strategies is sometimes good but is not consistently applied. Individual incentive schemes are implemented but not always closely followed, so that young people's progress is not always accurately measured and incentives promised are not always delivered. Staff have received extensive training in methods of control, including the use of restraint. However, monitoring of restraints is not sufficiently effective to ensure children and young people are being restrained appropriately. Following concerns about some of the methods of restraint, a 'no restraints' policy has been recently introduced to the home, to prevent the possibility of children and young people being injured during a restraint. All staff have received training in attachment and emotional development in preparation for forthcoming closer working with the multi-professional team in developing individualised behaviour management strategies.

Routine health and safety checks are carried out on the home to ensure that children and young people live in a safe environment. Fire drills are carried out regularly, but young people and staff who are new to the home do not routinely experience a fire drill within the first month of arrival. This means that some young people and staff may not have had the opportunity to practice the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire.

Although risk assessments are carried out on the premises and on children and young people's known and potential risk taking activities, these are not always sufficiently robust. For example, risk assessments relating to the placement of one young person in an independence training flat on the premises does not provide staff or the young person with sufficient guidance to ensure their safety. Where risk assessments do give good guidance to staff, these are not always followed. This places young people at unnecessary and avoidable risk.

A new door lock is in place to enable wheelchair users to exit the premises unaided. This involves a pushbutton mechanism and is a potential hazard to children and young people using the respite service. Good supervision ensures that no children or young people leave the premises without staff. However, individual risk assessments that are shared with social workers and parents do not address this potential danger.

Staff files are maintained in line with Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, with minor omissions. For example, photographic identity is not always held. This means that staff recruitment checks are not consistently implemented to a high standard and the home cannot demonstrate that all staff employed at the home are fully vetted as suitable individuals to work with children and young people. Where disciplinary investigations have taken place, staff files do not hold sufficient information to show the initial reason for disciplinary action, investigation methods and the outcome. This means the home cannot demonstrate that it safeguards children and young people through good disciplinary procedures and effective monitoring of staff member's practice on their return to work.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

The level of support provided to children and young people is varied and inconsistent. Some young people receive good support in line with their identified needs and wishes. They participate in group meetings and have the opportunity to meet with their key workers, but

this is not as often as they would like. A visitor from the National Youth Advocacy Service attends the home each month and assists children and young people to make their views known.

The home works with other professionals, such as the looked after children's nurse and the child and adolescent mental health service, to provide additional support to children who need it. The home recognises that more is needed to address the specific needs of individual children and young people. It is engaging with the multi-professional team to obtain advice and guidance, so that staff can improve the level of care and support they provide. Young people are supported to take controlled risks. However, the level of support provided is not always sufficient to ensure young people's welfare and safety is promoted.

The support children and young people receive with education is variable. Those young people who value education receive a high level of support including additional tuition. Other young people do not attend school and the arrangements put in place to ensure they continue to receive education are inadequate. The home works with schools, Connexions and the looked after children's education support services to assist young people in finding suitable college courses. Computers are available for young people, however, one has been out of use for seven weeks. This means that some young people are disadvantaged because they are unable to use a computer for homework, revision and communicating with friends and family.

Children and young people have the opportunity to engage in organised activities and outings with staff. Staff members share their interests with young people and encourage them to develop their talents and interests. For example, young people receive encouragement to participate in and enjoy music and are enabled to attend their school prom. Free passes are provided to the local leisure centre, but are used infrequently. Children who use the short break service have access to a wide range of play equipment and the enclosed, safe garden has been further developed to enable them to participate in gardening. The home does not provide children and young people with an annual holiday, even though this is their permanent home. This leaves young people feeling they are treated unfairly and are missing out because they live in a children's home.

Arrangements are in place to support young people to meet up with and visit friends and family. Children and young people enjoy spending their leisure time mixing with peers locally, however, these relationships can sometimes lead to inappropriate and dangerous behaviours.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Each young person has a placement plan that sets out their individual needs. The quality of these plans is varied. Placement planning does not always fully address the needs of each young person. Staff are sometimes unclear about their roles and do not provide sufficient levels of support to some young people. This does not adequately safeguard or promote young people's welfare. The home contributes to statutory reviews of care plans and produces a report on the young person's progress and development.

The home promotes contact with families and friends in accordance with each young person's individual needs and agreed plans. The staff team recognise the importance of families and their role in decision making for children and young people.



Children and young people are encouraged to attend and to contribute to planning and review meetings about themselves and some do so willingly and make effective contributions. Young person's meetings are held on some units although not regularly. Feedback to young people on queries raised within the meetings is not given formally, so young people are not aware of how issues raised are being addressed. This makes them feel that they are not being listened to.

A young person ably represents young people living in children's homes and those with disabilities on the local authority children in care council. Children and young people have the opportunity to participate in community events. For example, many children and young people enjoyed attending an event to celebrate the launch of the new council and several young people are preparing to participate in a forthcoming event by providing musical entertainment.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is inadequate.

The size and design of the home does not promote domestic style living for young people. The home consists of separate units on the same site with individual front doors and adjoining doors to the main building, which are kept locked. Security of the premises is an issue, young people from the local community have entered the premises without the knowledge of staff and this compromises the safety of children, young people and staff.

Since the last inspection, the home has been decorated throughout and young people have been consulted about the decoration of their own rooms, so that individual bedrooms are personalised and well furnished. Children and young people on the short break unit enjoy comfortable and pleasant accommodation. Improvements made provide a more comfortable home, but the layout of the home remains institutionalised. Dirty windows and external graffiti continues to detract from a homely environment.

The home is kept reasonably clean, but the fabric of the home is out of date and deteriorating. For example, the water tank that services the home is old and rusted; patio doors are in need of repair; toilets for the use of children and young people are in rooms without wash hand basins and this does not encourage good hygiene habits. The local authority is reluctant to provide funding for renovations because it recognises the shortfalls of the premises and plans to move the home to more suitable accommodation within the next 12 months. In the meantime, children and young people are living in below standard accommodation.

The lounge and kitchen doors are usually propped open during the day. They are fitted with locks so that these rooms can be made inaccessible to children and young people during education hours and after bedtime. Young people's bedrooms are kept locked and as children and young people do not have keys to their rooms, they need to ask staff to unlock their doors whenever they wish to enter their own rooms. This practice serves to safeguard property and privacy, however it does not promote domestic style living and does not encourage children and young people to feel 'at home'. Routine risk assessments have not been carried out on individual children and young people to determine whether some individuals can safely look after their own keys.

The home provides varying degrees of support to young people who are preparing for independent living. Whilst there is evidence of some very good work in assisting young people with disabilities to learn independent living skills, this is hindered by a lack of appropriate

facilities, such as a low level kitchen. Other young people are practising independent living skills in flats on the premises, some have not been adequately prepared for this. The home recognises these shortfalls and is taking action to address them.

## Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The home has been without a Registered Manager since September 2008. A temporary manager was appointed in December 2008 and submitted a Registered Manager application to Ofsted in June 2009. This demonstrates that the local authority has not met the requirement to appoint a person to manage the home within a reasonable timescale.

There are shortfalls in the monitoring of the operation of the home and visits to the home on behalf of the local authority are sporadic, so that the welfare of the children and young people who live there is not being effectively monitored.

Although the home operates as a single home with one manager, there is a separate statement of purpose for each unit. Whilst most of the information listed in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations is included, some pertinent information is missing or incorrect. This means that the statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the care provided at the home.

The home has established an additional unit, catering for young people preparing for independence. This is in breach of its conditions of registration and no variation application has been submitted to Ofsted. This means that the home is providing care and accommodation to young people that it is not registered to provide because Ofsted has not considered whether the home has the facilities and capability to provide this service. The home ceased using this unit immediately after the inspection.

The manager and most of the staff team are appropriately qualified and experienced in the care of children and young people. New staff are enrolled upon a suitable training programme within appropriate timescales, so that they learn good practice in working with children and young people. All staff have a supervision contract but the level of one-to-one supervision provided is not always in accordance with the guidance in the national minimum standards. This means that staff do not always receive the level of support they need to effectively look after the children and young people.

Children and young people like and trust the staff team and value their help and support. There is inconsistency across the home in the way that staff vacancies are covered. For example, in some units, shortfalls in the rota are addressed by employing regular agency staff to act as full time staff members on a temporary basis. This provides children and young people with good continuity of care. The staff team that looks after children and young people with disabilities is heavily supplemented with part time relief workers. This means that there can sometimes be 16 to 20 different staff members working in any one week. This does not provide good continuity of care for the permanent resident and means that those children having short stays are looked after by a selection of different staff, so that it is hard for them to form relationships with staff. The home has gone some way to addressing continuity of care for the permanent resident by allocating two members of staff to take responsibility for assisting the young person on outings and appointments.

The quality of the information held about individual children and young people is varied. Some files are well kept and comprehensive, whereas others do not contain all the information required. Young people confirmed they can see their files with the exception of third party confidential information. They know what is being written about them and are enabled to contribute to their records.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. There is inconsistency across the service in the level of care delivered. There is some good work with particular young people whose diverse needs are met. However, young people's rights are not always respected or promoted and their needs are not always recognised and addressed. The home is not adequately monitored to ensure that children and young people are treated equally and that diversity is valued and respected.

## 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
16	ensure records relating to complaints are appropriately maintained (Regulation 24(5))	31 July 2009
12	ensure that there is an up to date and comprehensive health plan for each young person accommodated at the home (Regulation 20)	31 July 2009
13	ensure that each child and young person has access to such medical treatment as they may require (Regulation 20)	31 July 2009
20	ensure that where any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 takes place, the Registered Person notifies the persons listed in column 2 without delay (Regulation 30)	31 July 2009
22	ensure that no measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable is used and regularly monitor the records of restraints and additional measures of control (Regulation 17)	31 July 2009
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children and young people accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible, eliminated (Regulation 23)	31 July 2009
26	ensure that the premises are fit for the purpose of a children's home, and that they are suitable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose (Reg 31 (1))	12 September 2009

23	provide for the number and needs of the children accommodated so far as is reasonably practicable, adequate facilities for children to prepare their own food if they wish and are of an age to do so (Regulation 31 (5))	12 September 2009
27	ensure that staff records demonstrate that suitability checks have been carried in accordance with Schedule 2 (Regulation 26)	31 August 2009
1	revise the statement of purpose so that it accurately describes the operation and conduct of the home and ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose (Regulation 4 and 5)	31 August 2009
32	ensure that the welfare of the children and young people is regularly monitored (Regulation 33)	31 July 2009
33	ensure that the operation of the home is effectively monitored (Regulation 34).	31 July 2009

## Recommendations

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

- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movements within the home are used only in relation to a child where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan (and care plan if appropriate) and are used only where necessary to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (NMS 23)
- ensure that dining rooms and their furnishings are suitable for the number and needs of children and staff dining in them (NMS 10)
- ensure that meals are set up to be well-managed, orderly, social occasions and provide children with food that is properly prepared, wholesome and nutritious, having regard to their cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and dietary needs and choices (NMS 10)
- ensure that children and young people involved in preparing food for others have received appropriate training or are appropriately supervised in safe food handling and hygiene (NMS 10)
- carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and take action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying (NMS 18)
- ensure that all children, young people and staff know the emergency evacuation procedures, including those for use at night (NMS 26)
- ensure that staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour and that measures of control are designed to help the child and are fair and consistently applied (NMS 22)
- ensure that all children are given individual support in line with their needs and wishes and children identified as having particular needs receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested (NMS 7)

- 
- ensure that young people have access to a computer to assist them with studying (NMS 14)
  - provide an educational programme during normal school hours for children and young people who are not in school (NMS 14)
  - ensure that medicine administration records indicate when medication ceases and when and how it is disposed of (NMS 13)
  - ensure that all staff receive one-to-one supervision in line with the guidance in the National Minimum Standards (NMS 28)
  - provide the manager with such training as is necessary for managing the children's home (NMS 31)
  - ensure that each child's file contains all the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations (NMS 35).