
**THE ROYAL
BOROUGH OF**



**KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA**

ST MARK'S CLOSE

1999 - 2000 ANNUAL INSPECTION REPORT

REGISTRATION AND INSPECTION UNIT

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND CORPORATE
STRATEGY**

**HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES BUSINESS
GROUP**

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Registration and Inspection Unit

Annual Inspection Report

Name of Home	St Mark's Close Children's Home
Number of Places	10
Number of Single Rooms	10
Name of Proprietor	Director of Social Services Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Kensington Town Hall Hornton Street W8 7NX
Name of Manager	Terry Windsor
Weekly Charges	£1,349
Dates and times of inspection	Monday 22 nd November 1999 9.30 am - 6.00 pm Wednesday 24 th November 9.00 am - 4.45 pm
Inspection Officer	Tony Lawrence
Lay Assessor	Jane Southwell
Staff present at the inspection	Terry Windsor - Manager John Will - Residential Social Worker Gary Kenny - Residential Social Worker Jason Francis - Residential Social Worker Navjot Dhouma - Residential Social Worker Susan Hendricks - Residential Social Worker Vivienne Surgeon - Residential Social Worker Hamida Davidson - Residential Social Worker Diane Lalande - Day Provision Manager Pauline Oatway - Domestic Assistant Marion White - Domestic Assistant Tony Joseph - Handyman

CONTENTS

Issues Outstanding	Page 4
Care Practices	Page 4
Premises and Facilities	Page 9
Staffing and Management	Page 11
Policies and Record Keeping	Page 13
Visits and Complaints	Page 15
Young People's Comments	Page 16
Staff Comments	Page 17
Relatives and Professionals' Comments	Page 19
Inspection Officer's Comments	Page 20
Requirements and Recommendations	Page 22
Lay Assessor's Report	Page 25

PROGRESS ON ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTIONS

The last annual inspection of St Mark's took place in July 1998 and a statutory unannounced inspection of the home took place in March 1999. Many of the requirements and recommendations made at these inspections have been implemented, including:

- a review of management arrangements and responsibilities
- the publication of an updated Statement of Purpose and Function
- the resumption of regular monitoring visits by the Service Manager
- the updating of all police checks on staff
- improvements in the recording of young people admitted to and leaving the home

Two issues were outstanding:

- **Prescribed medication administered by staff must be accurately recorded.**

At the time of this inspection, no prescribed medication was managed by staff. Staff spoken with during the inspection were clear about the home's procedures for recording medication.

- **The record of young people admitted to and leaving the home must be accurately maintained.**

This is now being done by the home's Administrator.

CARE PRACTICES

The last annual inspection report, written in July 1998, commented on the range of services offered at St Mark's Close. The home's manager worked three days a week and was responsible for the residential service, semi-independent flats, Day Provision Unit, outreach service and the Children's Resource Team. The report commented that these arrangements were inadequate and recommended that they were reviewed. Since the last inspection, a number of changes have taken place:

- the home has a new, full time Manager.
- The Children's Resource Team has moved out of the home and is now managed separately.
- Outreach work with local young people and their families, intended to prevent admission to residential care, is no longer taking place.
- one of the home's Deputy Managers has left to take up a new post, assessing residential placements outside the Royal Borough.

- one of the home's Senior Residential Social Workers left to work in another Authority, the second Senior Residential Social Worker has been given responsibility for managing the Day Provision Unit and is no longer included on the home's staffing rota. One of the home's Residential Social Workers has been given responsibility for supporting young people who have moved from St Mark's Close into local accommodation. She is also no longer included on the residential home's rota.

These changes have meant that the home has experienced a significant loss of experienced staff, with a total of more than 60 years' experience of working with challenging young people. However, the Department's decision to concentrate on providing a residential service to young people looked after by the Council is a positive development, although new practices and procedures will need time to become established. Further management and staffing changes have been made and these are discussed later in this report.

This inspection report will comment on the care provided to the young people with emphasis on the ways in which staff attempt to assess and meet the young people's health and education needs.

Only a small percentage of the referrals to St Mark's are planned. Most of the 34 young people admitted since the last inspection arrived with little notice, following the breakdown of their previous placement, either at home, with foster parents or in another children's home.

St Mark's also has one space for short term, emergency care and this is regularly used.

At the time of this inspection, the two, 2 bedroom semi-independent flats attached to the main unit were each occupied by one young person. Both young people are attending college and both flats are well kept, comfortably furnished and tidy. Both kitchens contained a selection of fresh vegetables and dried foods and one young person had an extensive selection of herbs and spices. Staff are successfully working with both young people, helping them to prepare for moving on to more independent accommodation. One young person has successfully moved from the main unit into one of the flats where he is largely independent. The other young person was referred directly to the home's other semi-independent flat. The aim for both young people is that they will eventually move into their own flats.

However, key workers should ensure that regular checks are made of the two flats and that the young people are reminded of the need to defrost their fridges and avoid trailing electric leads.

Seven young people were living in the main unit, two of whom, both aged 16, have care plans which include a progression to independence through the home's bedsits and semi-independent flats.

Two young people were living in the two bed sitting rooms and sharing a kitchen, bathroom and toilet. The kitchen is not equipped with a cooker and there is little opportunity for the young people to cook their own meals, apart from cereals and toast for breakfast. During the inspection, staff planned to support one young person to cook an evening meal, using facilities in the Day Provision Unit, but this is only possible if a member of staff can be spared. Cooking facilities in the bedsit kitchen would be more convenient and this is an area of work which should be developed with young people preparing to move on to more independent accommodation.

Five other young people were living in single rooms in the main unit. A great deal of staff time and effort has recently been focused on providing activities for the young people in the evening and at weekends and a number of initiatives are being introduced:

- one member of staff is drawing up a programme of activities, making good use of local resources.
- reward programmes have been devised for use with two young people. The aim for one young person is to encourage attendance the Day Provision Unit. Staff have concerns about the second young person's use of offensive language and the reward programme is intended to reduce this. Both programmes are well recorded and have had some positive effects on the young people's behaviour.
- a selection of board games has been bought and with support from staff, the young people enjoyed several games of Monopoly during the week of the inspection.
- the home's Manager intends to introduce a Support Plan for each of the young people living at St Mark's Close. These will detail the young person's care needs and the ways in which residential staff can meet these. The Support Plan will focus on the work of staff in the home and will complement the young person's Care Plan which includes wider care issues.

Evidence was seen on young people's case files that their health needs are assessed by residential staff and others involved in their care. One case file did show that there was some confusion about agreed procedures determining who should carry out statutory medical examinations and this should be clarified with staff and the young people's social workers. Young people have access to a great deal of written information, both in the residential unit and the Day Provision Unit, about the effects of using illegal drugs. Staff also told us that they discuss the issue frequently with the young people. Young people spoken with during the inspection and those returning confidential questionnaires told us that they could talk to staff about health issues.

Most of the young people at St Mark's have been excluded from school. All those of school age have been offered places either in a Pupil Referral Unit or the Day Provision Unit at St Mark's. Their attendance is sporadic however and staff told us that they regularly have to remind some young people about completing work and the times they should be going to their education units. Other young people have successfully moved from school to local colleges where they are completing further

education or vocational training. One young person is receiving Job Seeker's Allowance while he looks for a job. He has made a number of applications to local employers and has been for several interviews. In their discussions with the Inspection Officer and Lay Assessor, all of the young people appeared to be highly motivated and ambitious. However, for most, their education has been severely disrupted by the number of moves they have made between the family home, children's homes and foster placements. When much of the work needed to attain formal qualifications is based on course work, this disruption severely affects the educational chances of the young people at St Mark's. The day provision is a popular option for many of the young people and it is hoped that improved links can be made with the education service to enable young people to complete their schooling with some recognised qualifications.

The current group living at St Mark's Close includes some very vulnerable young people who need intensive support. Staff in the home are concerned that they are unable to provide the sort of service they would like as much of their time is spent managing vulnerable young people with high care needs. Staff are aware that six young people living in the main unit regularly smoke cannabis and some possibly use other illegal drugs. Peer group pressure has resulted in one young person not previously known to have used drugs smoking cannabis and this is a serious concern. Staff in the home and the Day Provision Unit are consistently explaining the dangers of illegal drugs to the young people, but this educational approach appears to be having little effect. Some young people believe that they are immune from action as long as they do not use drugs in the home and this has resulted their joining local young people openly smoking cannabis in the streets outside the home. The home's practice is to call the police every time they suspect young people are using drugs, but the police are not always able to respond. In recent weeks, St Mark's Close staff have begun to call the police without first warning the young people. This has resulted in two young people recently being arrested and cautioned. One young person has been cautioned twice and warned that she will be charged if the offence is repeated. However, this approach appears to have had little effect in reducing the use of illegal drugs and further action is urgently needed.

Comment from the home

The issue of drug use is taken very seriously at St Marks Close, but there has been a worrying increase. To date this has been dealt with by staff in the manner stated above. St Marks will now monitor and record drug use in a systematic way and arrange to meet with a senior officer from the local police force and a specialist drug agency to develop a multi-agency approach to the situation

The high care needs of the young people at St Mark's Close are also reflected in the number of violent incidents recorded by staff - 16 since June 1999. While this is not a particularly high number, only the most serious incidents are being recorded by staff. This was discussed during the inspection and it is clear that staff do not record the

majority of incidents, especially if physical violence is not involved. During the inspection, several incidents of verbal aggression directed towards staff and other young people were witnessed, but staff said these kind of incidents would not normally be recorded. The Department's report form for recording violent incidents includes verbal aggression and all incidents must be recorded to ensure that an accurate picture is obtained.

Comment from the home

It is agreed that a more comprehensive reporting of incidents will take place at St Marks.

Supported Accommodation

Nine young people are supported in local flats. Four flats are available, three have two bedrooms and the other three. At the time of this inspection, two of the smaller flats were occupied by young women. The other two bedroom flat and the larger flat were occupied by young men. Following the reorganisation of services in the home, support is now provided by an experienced, full time member of staff, who does not work shifts in the main unit.

Most of the young people living in the flats at the time of this inspection had been referred directly, without spending time in the main residential unit at St Mark's. Referrals are made by Social Workers who complete an application form with the young person.

Young people living in the flats buy their own food and clothes and are responsible for paying their rent, electricity and TV licence. They are also expected to keep the flats clean and reasonably tidy. Each flat is visited once a week by staff and a flat meeting is also held weekly. A planning meeting is held every six months for each young person. The young person, their Social Worker, the social work Team Manager and the member of staff from St Mark's attend the meeting to review progress and agree when the young person should be referred for independent housing. Four young people have recently moved on from the flats under a scheme developed jointly by the Social Services Department and Centrepont. After the decision is made that a young person is ready to leave the supported accommodation provided at St Mark's, they are offered a six month tenancy with support available from a Centrepont worker. If the six month trial period goes well, the support is withdrawn and the young person is given a full tenancy. Up to ten young people can be supported at any one time in this way. The scheme only supports those young people who are assessed as needing continuing support before becoming fully independent. Young people living at St Mark's who are considered to have the necessary independent living skills have to wait for the offer of a tenancy through the Common Housing Register.

As part of this inspection, a visit was made to one of the two bedroom flats. The large lounge / dining room, stairs and kitchen were being decorated at the time and one of the young people was very pleased with the standard of work. Bedrooms were not seen during this short visit, but communal areas are spacious and comfortably furnished.

The Inspection Officer also observed a flat meeting between the member of staff and the two young men living in one of the supported flats. Both young men were proud of the way in which they had redecorated most of the flat and were insistent that visitors respected the no smoking rule they had introduced. The flat is spacious and provides a very good standard of accommodation. The flat meetings are used to discuss any issues of concern or maintenance issues which need attention. Employment and education opportunities are also discussed and both young men obviously felt comfortable any issue with the member of staff supporting them.

Conclusion

The majority of the young people currently living at St Mark's Close have very high care needs and present some challenging behaviours, which staff are finding difficult to manage. The use of illegal drugs by young people from the home is a serious concern. Despite the best efforts of staff the problem is increasing and urgent action must be taken to address this. The problems are made worse by the way in which delinquent behaviour is reinforced by the high number of challenging young people living at St Mark's Close at the time of the inspection. The home's Statement of Purpose says that the intention is not to provide long term care for most young people, but to return them to their families or move them to foster care or other children's homes. The Statement does say that two places are available on a longer term basis for young people with high care needs. The present situation is that three young people have lived in the main unit for more than six months and four or five have very high care needs. This makes the job of residential staff difficult and there is a danger that they will fail to help the majority of the young people living in the home unless urgent action is taken.

PREMISES and FACILITIES

The home is located on a housing estate in the north of the Royal Borough, close to the shops, transport and community facilities of Ladbroke Grove. Accommodation is arranged over two floors.

Ground floor	<p>There is a large dining room / kitchen / lounge area with a pool table and music system. The kitchen is well equipped and there is a large walk in food store. The furniture in the dining and lounge areas is comfortable and homely. There is access to the garden from the lounge. A second lounge</p> <p>for the young people's use is also very comfortably furnished, attractively decorated and equipped with a TV, video and tropical fish tank. Young people also have access to a visitors' room, with TV and stereo music system.</p> <p>An enclosed phone room is provided for the young people's use and an impressive number of health information leaflets are displayed on the</p>
--------------	---

	<p>walls. The manager has his own office, which is also used as a base by the home's Administrator. There is a staff office and a separate meeting room.</p> <p>There are two toilets on the ground floor. Much of the ground floor has been redecorated since the last inspection and the communal areas are now attractive and welcoming.</p>
First floor	<p>There are six bedrooms and two bed-sitting rooms on the first floor. The bed-sitting rooms share a small kitchen, bathroom and toilet. A second bathroom with shower and two more toilets are provided for use by the young people. A small number of maintenance and health and safety issues were discussed with the home's Manager during the inspection and these are included as an appendix to this report.</p> <p>The young people's bedrooms were generally well furnished and most had been decorated with pictures of favourite football teams or pop groups. Bedroom doors are not lockable and locks should be fitted to provide young people with privacy and security for their personal belongings. It is important that any locks fitted can be opened from the outside by staff if necessary.</p> <p>There is a well equipped laundry room which can be used by young people between 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m.</p> <p>There is another office on the first floor which is also used by the waking night staff. A bedroom for the member of staff on call each night is located close to the office.</p>
Exterior	<p>The home has its own entrance which has ramped access in addition to steps. Some form of lighting is needed in the doorway to minimise the risk of accidents. The previous light fitting has been broken and a more robust replacement is needed.</p> <p>There is a small garden at the rear of the building with a paved area, small grass area, picnic bench and storage shed. The garden is the only part of the home where staff can smoke.</p>

Overall, St Mark's Close provides a good standard of accommodation, considering the very heavy wear and tear to which the decoration and furnishings are subjected. Most of the young people's rooms are well personalised with pictures and posters reflecting each person's interests. There was evidence in some bedrooms however that young people do smoke in their rooms. Key workers must ensure that young people are aware that this is not allowed.

The provision of a room where young people could do their school or college work should be considered. Although young people do have access to a personal computer

in the Day Provision Unit, this is dependent on the availability of residential staff to supervise its use.

STAFFING and MANAGEMENT

The home's staffing establishment comprises:

- 1 x Manager
- 2 x Deputy Managers
- 1 x Senior Residential Social Worker
- 5 x Residential Social Workers
- 2 x Assistant Residential Social Workers
- 2 x Waking Night Staff
- 2 x Domestic Assistants (part-time)
- 1 x Handyman (part-time 16 hours per week)
- 1 x Administrator (part-time 12 hours per week)
- 1 x Cook (part-time)

At the time of this inspection one Deputy Manager's post was vacant and was covered by a Residential Social Worker acting up. Agency staff were also covering three Residential Social Worker posts. During the day there is a minimum of two members of staff on duty in the morning from 7.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. A minimum of three staff work each afternoon from 2.30 - 10.30 p.m. At night there is one Waking Night Staff and a second person on call if assistance is needed. Staffing levels at any time of the day or night can be increased if necessary. There is at least one male and one female member of staff on duty at all times.

Since the last annual inspection there have been a series of changes to the home's management and staffing arrangements. The home's new Manager told us that the purpose of the changes was to clarify the range of responsibilities and reduce stress for staff, which had resulted in high sickness levels, especially amongst senior staff. The new structure means that:

- the Manager directly supervises the two deputy managers, one member of staff who supports young people in the semi-independent flat shares, the Day Provision Unit Manager and the home's support staff.
- both Deputy Managers now work exclusively with the young people in the residential unit and supervise the Residential Social Workers.
- on each shift an experienced Residential Social Worker is designated as the Shift Co-ordinator with responsibility for agreeing and implementing a shift plan with other staff on duty. Shift Co-ordinators are supported by the Deputy Managers, although it is not possible to guarantee that a Deputy is available on every shift.
- the home's key worker systems are being reviewed and Support Plans will be introduced for each young person. Key workers will be responsible for co-

ordinating the Support Plan, identifying the young person's needs and how these will be met in the home.

The Inspection Unit supports these changes, which clarify the role of residential staff at St Mark's. Staff will however need support from managers to ensure that new policies and procedures are introduced with the minimum disruption to young people living in the home.

Since the last annual inspection staff meetings have been held each week. Meeting minutes were checked and showed a clear record of issues which were discussed. As staff have access to information technology, consideration should be given to word processing the minutes and other records, as hand written entries can be very difficult to decipher.

During this inspection, the Inspection Officer and Lay Assessor sat in on two staff handovers between shifts. Both handovers were very busy, with a great deal of information being exchanged about the young people, appointments, meetings and tasks which needed to be completed by staff coming on duty.

Staff supervision should take place every 2 - 3 weeks and should last at least an hour. This target has not been achieved in recent months and some supervision sessions have been missed. This issue has been prioritised by the home's new manager, who told us that the new management structure should help to ensure that staff receive regular supervision. In each three week period, each member of staff should also spend time with their supervisor reviewing the care plan for a young person they key work.

The home's manager told us that releasing staff for training courses is also difficult, but staff have attended courses on mental health awareness, 16+ preparation for independence, health and safety and recruitment.

Police checks have been carried out on all permanent staff and are up to date.

POLICIES AND RECORD KEEPING

The following records were found to be well kept:

Schedule 1

Schedule 1 of the Children Act Regulations requires each home to produce a Statement of Purpose and Function. St Mark's Statement of Purpose was reviewed during 1999 and provides a clear picture of the services

provided to children and young people living in the home. The Statement also provides information for social workers and parents about the home's admission procedures (planned and emergency) and review systems. Because of changes to the service and staffing in the home, there is a need to amend the Statement and the Inspection Unit should be provided with the updated version, when it is available.

Brochure

A detailed booklet, including colour photos, was produced for young people in March 1999. It gives information about the home's key worker and care planning systems, arrangements for reviews, health and education, contact with family, religion, fire safety, personal belongings / pocket money, rules, sanctions, confidentiality / access to files and the Department's complaints procedure.

Regulation 22 reports

A monthly monitoring visit is made to the home by the Department's Service Manager (Care Resources). A written report is produced following each visit. Issues covered in each report include staffing, premises, young people's welfare, health and safety, policies and procedures. The Service Manager carries out each visit with assistance from either a member of staff or one of the young people living in the home. The views of staff and young people are fully included in the report and they are asked to sign to say that their views have been accurately represented. Copies of monitoring reports are routinely sent to the Inspection Unit for information.

Admissions / discharges

A good record is kept of all young people moving into and leaving the home.

Sanctions

A good record is kept of any sanctions which are imposed. Sanctions used are usually payment for damage caused or a period of time during which the young person is not allowed out of the home. All sanctions are agreed by the home's manager, who signs the record when the sanction is completed.

Pocket Money

A good record is kept of all pocket money given to young people.

Personal Logs

A detailed record is maintained of all contact between staff and young people living in the home. Issues of concern are noted and may be discussed at a staff meeting, to ensure that all staff respond consistently. The log books are also used at the daily handover

between shifts to ensure that all staff coming on duty are aware of the current issues for each young person. It is a recommendation of this report that the log books for the young people in the off-site flat shares are separated from those of the young people living in the main unit and attached semi-independent flats.

Case files

Two young people's case files were checked in detail and four others were checked to ensure that they had the relevant Looked After Children documentation. Each file contained a very useful checklist, enabling staff to quickly see what documentation should be included on the file and whose responsibility it is to ensure forms are completed. There is a section on the checklist to note when specific forms have been requested from social workers and when these should be provided.

Both files looked at in detail contained all the required Looked After Children forms, including Essential Information Records, Placement Plans, Care Plans and Reviews. The only form not completed on both files was the record of clothing brought into the home by the young people when they arrived.

Three other files were well organised and contained all required information. One file contained only basic information as the young person had recently moved to St Mark's. Details of outstanding information were clearly noted at the front of the file.

In general, the standard of record keeping at St Mark's is very good. Files are securely stored and checklists enable key workers to ensure that all required information is requested and obtained.

The following requirements and recommendations are made to improve recording practices.

Fire Safety

The home should ensure that they have service records for the fire extinguishers and fire blankets

Staff meeting minutes

Although the meetings are generally well minuted, staff should consider word processing the final version, as hand written records can be difficult to decipher.

Visitors Book

It is important that an accurate record is kept of all official visitors to the home. The visitors book seen during this inspection contained no signatures for the

period 4th - 24th November. Staff should ensure that all official visitors are asked to sign the record.

VISITS and COMPLAINTS

Number of visits to the home since the last annual inspection (July 1998).

Announced 1

A meeting was held at the home in October 1998 to agree the home's responses to the last annual inspection report.

Unannounced 2

The statutory unannounced inspection of the home took place in December 1998. A second unannounced inspection took place in March 1999.

Number of complaints received by the Authority

Complaints involving homes managed by the local authority are dealt with by the Social Services Department 's Customer Care and Complaints Officers. Since the last annual inspection there have been formal complaints from two young people. Both concerned the violent behaviour of another young person placed in the home. The complaints were passed to the Service Manager (Children's Care Resources) who wrote to each young person explaining what action was being taken.

Both young people were spoken with during the inspection and they told us that they felt their complaints had been taken seriously but said they felt staff in the home were "powerless" to resolve the issue. The letter from the Service Manager was appreciated, but was felt by the young people to have done little to improve the situation in the home. The young person responsible for the disruption eventually moved to another home.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Before the inspection, confidential questionnaires were sent to nine young people living in the home. Two questionnaires were returned.

One young person said that they would rather live at home but St Mark's was "all right". The second young person said the home has "a nice environment" and it was "good being close to friends". One person said they are very happy with the food provided, there is enough choice and it is easy to make snacks and drinks outside meal times. The second person said there is "not enough choice, but making snacks is easy".

Both young people said that staff helped them with their hobbies and interests.

Both young people said they are happy with the health services they receive, although one person said they had not seen a dentist.

Both young people said that they are happy to talk to staff about drugs, bullying and physical health issues. One young person said they would talk to staff about sex education, but the second young person said that they would not feel comfortable doing this. One young person said they are satisfied with the education provided by the Day Provision Unit. The other young person said the education they receive is “all right”.

The Inspection Officer and Lay Assessor both spent time speaking with young people during this inspection. Although they were generally satisfied with the care they receive, some young people find it difficult to accept that staff are in a position of authority. We were told that there is a general feeling that staff should let the young people do as they like and any attempt to control the young people’s behaviour is seen as unwanted meddling or interfering.

One young person talked about the difficulties which can arise when young people are living with people they do not know. Personality differences can cause a great deal of anxiety and individual’s responses can often be verbally or physically aggressive. We were told that recently one young person had “terrorised” most of the other people living at St Mark’s and staff were unable to do anything about it. Young people said that they “lived in fear of the person’s violent behaviour and threats” and they felt unsupported when they complained to senior managers.

Response from the Social Services Department

The Department is reviewing the way decisions are made to ensure more appropriate and effective placements are made for young people. While on occasion young people may be inappropriately placed at St Mark’s, this will be avoided wherever possible. The Government’s Quality Protects initiative will also provide additional resources to help ensure young people are appropriately placed in residential care.

Despite these concerns, young people did say that staff were interested in their welfare and tried to help them learn the skills they would need to become more independent. One young person said that it was the best children’s home they had lived in, but said they would never tell the staff that !

STAFF COMMENTS

Before the inspection, confidential questionnaires were sent to eighteen members of staff in the home. Four questionnaires were returned. Because of this poor response,

all staff were contacted after the inspection and offered the opportunity to speak with the Inspection Officer.

One person said they thought the home's key worker and care planning systems were "good". Three people described these systems as "adequate".

One person said they receive "too much" supervision, one person "enough" and two people "not enough". One person said they received "enough" training and three people said there was "not enough".

Two people described the home's child protection policies and procedures as "good" and two people as "adequate".

All four staff said there are only enough staff on duty "sometimes".

Other issues raised included:

- the lack of funding to provide activities for young people
- a lack of consistency with young people given different and conflicting messages
- basic daily care and routines can be missed
- primary care needs are not always met as health and education appointments are missed
- Looked After Children materials are not completed or contain inaccurate information
- staff morale needs to be improved
- care planning systems need to be reviewed
- staff need more support

Some of these issues were discussed with staff and young people during the inspection.

Lack of funding for activities

As noted in this report, some new games had been purchased following requests from staff to enable them to provide more organised activities. One member of staff is also compiling a programme of activities using local resources. Young people told us that they were able to participate in activities and staff helped them with their hobbies and interests.

Response from the home

Activities are regularly discussed by the staff team. There is a need to develop more activities but funding is available for this.

Lack of consistency, with young people given conflicting messages

This is a difficult issue which has been raised in previous inspection reports. During this inspection, there was one incident when staff on duty did not call the police when they knew young people were smoking cannabis. This was picked up by staff coming on duty and caused some friction in the handover.

On another occasion recorded in the young people's log books, staff dealt differently with two similar incidents involving two young people. On one occasion, the young person was given something to eat although they had returned to the home later than agreed. On the second occasion, staff refused to make a sandwich for the young person and the situation escalated. Ensuring consistent responses by staff is difficult and incidents such as these should be discussed in staff meetings to reduce the number of such incidents.

Health and education appointments are missed

This issue has also been raised in previous inspection reports when staff from the residential unit were not always informing the Day Provision Unit if young people were refusing to attend. The planned separation of the two services makes good communication a necessity and this should be stressed to all staff.

There was no evidence during the inspection that health appointments were missed and the young people's health care needs were generally well recorded.

Looked After Children materials are inaccurate or incomplete

Again there was no evidence during the inspection to support this opinion. The standard of recording in the young people's case files was very good and the checklist at the front of each file enables key workers to ensure that all LAC materials are requested from social workers and placed on file.

Care planning systems need to be reviewed.

This issue is being addressed by the staff team. The introduction of a Support Plan for each young person should ensure that their care needs are recorded and that residential staff are clear about their role in meeting these. Support Plans will be checked at future inspections.

Staff morale is low and more support is needed

There was evidence during the inspection that some staff are finding it difficult to adjust to the major changes which have taken place in the past year. The changes to an established staff team and the loss of colleagues with many years experience has been unsettling and it will take time for all those working in the home to adjust to their new roles. The home has access to support from an external consultant who meets with the staff team every six weeks.

Response from the home

The home's manager is confident that staff morale will continue to improve as changes are established.

RELATIVES AND PROFESSIONALS' COMMENTS

Before the inspection, confidential questionnaires were sent to eight relatives and eight social workers involved with the young people living in the home.

Relatives

Two questionnaires were returned.

Both people said that staff are welcoming when they visit the home. Both also said that they are kept informed of any issues affecting their relative and can discuss care issues with staff.

Social Workers

Six questionnaires were returned and two social workers made separate comments.

Five people said that young people are "always" involved in making decisions about their lives and one person said they are "usually" involved.

Two people said they are "very happy" with the way the home is furnished and decorated. Three people said they were "reasonably happy". One person did not answer this question.

Three people said staff are "always" very welcoming when they visit the home. Three people said staff are "usually" very welcoming.

Four people described the quality of care received by the young people as "very good" and two people as "quite good".

Three people said they were "very happy" and three people "reasonably happy" with the home's key worker and care planning systems.

Other comments included:

- staff have offered a very good service. The young person's key worker and other staff gave her a lot of time and encouragement. The placement has offered security and consistent care to a young person who finds it difficult to accept boundaries and plans for the future.
- staff have always been helpful in the referral and admission processes.

- staff are helpful, professional, thorough, reliable, dependent and caring. They take their responsibilities seriously and work well with social workers.
- staff have taken responsibility for tasks which are the responsibility of other professionals, without complaint or hesitation.
- staff put the needs of young people first, within the boundaries of best practice and Departmental policy and procedures.
- staff do difficult, occasionally risky and always mentally and emotionally demanding work with traumatised, delinquent and emotionally deprived young people. They have my highest appreciation and respect.
- it is almost impossible to make contact with St Mark's on the telephone as it is frequently engaged for long periods.
- key workers establish professional relationships with young people, many of whom continue to talk about the staff long after they have left St Mark's.

INSPECTION OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Since the last annual inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing and the services provided at St Mark's Close. The home has a new, full time manager, but has lost a considerable amount of expertise with changes in the senior staff team. The range of services offered has been reduced with a decision to concentrate resources on providing residential care for young people looked after by the Council. While this development is supported by the Inspection Unit, the cessation of outreach work with young people could have future implications for the home. The original purpose of the outreach work introduced by the staff team at St Mark's was to support young people in their own homes, with the aim of preventing an admission to residential care. If this work is not carried out, it is likely that the number of children and young people needing to be accommodated will increase, placing additional pressures on the home.

Comment from the home

The Social Services Department is actively looking at alternative ways of providing outreach support to young people and their families.

As stated in the section on Care Practices, the major issue which needs to be addressed by the Department is the use of illegal drugs by many of the young people living in the home. The concentration of a high percentage of young people with significant care needs and challenging behaviours makes the work of staff extremely difficult and this needs to be addressed by the Department. If the home is to accommodate higher numbers of very vulnerable young people, the Statement of Purpose and staffing levels will need to be reviewed.

During the two days of the inspection the Inspection Officer and Lay Assessor witnessed a number of incidents which provided some insight into the daily life of the home:

- relationships between staff and young people were largely very positive. Young people said that staff were concerned for their welfare, although they did not always agree with advice and guidance they were given. Interactions between staff and most young people were typified by good humour. Young people were encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions and were often praised when they responded appropriately to requests from staff.
- staff told us that the young people were aware of the importance of the inspection and, to begin with, they were on their “best behaviour”. Young people were also quite open about telling us that daily life in the home at the start of the inspection was untypical. This showed a willingness to co-operate with staff in presenting a positive picture of life in the home. We were told that one young person told staff she could not believe the efforts being made by other young people to modify their behaviour, while the inspection was taking place.
- Despite the goodwill on both sides however, it was difficult for the young people to sustain this for the duration of the inspection. During the afternoon of the first day and parts of the second day there was a great deal of friction between individual young people and this inevitably affected relationships with staff. Much of the staff time on the first afternoon was spent keeping two young people apart in an attempt to prevent a fight breaking out. One of the young people resented the attempts by staff to manage her behaviour and she spent much of the time shouting and swearing at staff, while laying on the floor and kicking the lounge door. This acting out also affected other young people who were drawn into the conflict and the staff on duty were stretched to contain the situation.

These incidents were discussed with staff and young people who agreed that they were more typical of daily life in the home. It should be remembered that the young people living at St Mark’s have experienced considerable disruption in their lives. They have not chosen to live together and it would be unreasonable to expect them all to get along without any friction or disagreements. We were however, impressed by their good humour, openness and willingness to spend time telling us about life in the home.

It is clear from this inspection that the staff team at St Mark’s Close are working with a number of young people with high care needs. At the same time they are having to adjust to major changes in the way in which they support young people. Despite these challenges, staff are committed to providing a high quality service and have achieved some notable successes with individual young people. The overwhelmingly positive comments made by social workers who have knowledge of the home should also be noted.

**CONFIRMATION OF ISSUES
ARISING FROM THIS INSPECTION**

A meeting was held in the home on 7th February 2000 to discuss this report and agree the Department's responses to the following requirements and recommendations. Present at the meeting were:

Alan Jones	-	Service Manager (Care Resources)
Terry Windsor	-	Manager, 3 St Mark's Close
Paul Maloney	-	Principal Inspection Officer
Tony Lawrence	-	Inspection Officer
Jane Southwell	-	Lay Assessor

REQUIREMENTS

- **The Department should address the issue of drug use by the young people living at St Mark's Close.**

Response from the home

Since the annual inspection the home's manager has written a strategy for managing drug use by young people in the home. The strategy will involve:

- ⇒ closer monitoring of young people's behaviour
- ⇒ consistency in the way in which staff respond to drug use in the home
- ⇒ an inter-agency approach to managing the problem, involving the police and a specialist drugs agency
- ⇒ closer liaison with the local estate managers
- ⇒ closer contact with the youth service to provide opportunities for young people to become involved in organised activities

- **Staff must ensure that all violent incidents are recorded, not only those involving physical violence.**

Response from the home

Staff will be reminded that reports should be completed for all incidents of verbal aggression. Staff will also be asked to record these incidents in the log book at the end of each shift. This information will then be collated to provide accurate data about the frequency of violent incidents in the home.

- **The home's Statement of Purpose should be amended to ensure that it accurately reflects the service provided by the home. In particular the number of young people with high care needs should be kept under review.**

Response from the home

The Statement of Purpose will be updated.

The Department is also reviewing the way effective placements are made with a view to reducing the number of occasions on which St Mark's are asked to accommodate more than two young people with high care needs.

- **Security lighting should be replaced outside the front door.**

Response from the home

This will be done.

- **All staff must receive regular supervision.**

Response from the home

This is now closely monitored and has a high priority.

- **Service records should be obtained for the home's fire extinguishers and fire blankets.**

Response from the home

This will be done.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A cooker should be provided for the first floor bedsit kitchenette.**

Response from the home

The Fire Brigade have visited the home and advised that extensive works are required if a cooker is to be installed in the kitchenette. However, some provision will be made in plans for this area.

- **The maintenance issues noted in the attached appendix should be addressed.**

Response from the home

See Appendix.

- **Locks should be provided on the young people's bedroom doors to enable privacy.**

Response from the home

Agreed. A quote has been obtained for the required work and funding has been applied for.

- **A room should be provided where young people can do their school or college work.**

Response from the home

Ways of supporting young people to do homework will be discussed with the staff team. Use of a number of areas around the home will be encouraged rather than providing a designated room.

- **Staff should ensure that all official visitors sign the visitors book.**

Response from the home

Staff will be reminded that all official visitors should sign the visitors book.

Signature: _____ **Manager / Proprietor**

Signature: _____ **Inspection Officer**

Date: _____

LAY ASSESSOR'S REPORT

In accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Health a lay assessor is to participate in the inspection process of residential homes.

The Lay Assessor is entirely independent of the home and the Local Authority, including its Inspection Unit. The opinions contained in this report are solely those of the Lay Assessor.

Name of Home: St Mark's Close

Date and time of inspection: Monday 22nd November 1999
9.15 am-6.30 pm

Wednesday 24th November 1999
9.30 am-5.00 pm

Activities Undertaken During the Inspection

Interviews with young people, managers and staff, observation of a staff handover, examination of records and inspection of premises.

OBSERVATIONS

1. A general description of the home

St Mark's is situated within a large housing estate, with many facilities available - shops/health centres/dentists, etc. On arrival I was met by an agency worker who showed both myself and the inspector in. The visitors book was offered for signing on both occasions of the visits. The premises showed evidence of much wear and tear which I suppose reflects the age of the young people there.

2. Views and impressions of the experiences of residents and care received

On Monday, I met three of the young people there. The young people I spoke to were very open about their care but more importantly their connections that the staff knew about, which as far as they were concerned didn't worry them. However they all said St Mark's was the best place to be in. This group however were not overly concerned about what happened to them in the future.

3. Observations on staffing and management of the home

The first day, Monday, the Manager who had, I understand just taken over, outlined his policies, and suggested that the staff might well voice disquiet about the changes to the original routine. On meeting staff all voiced concerned about the blatant use of cannabis by a core group of young people and were not entirely happy with the changes. On a handover on Wednesday there was distinct tension between several

members of staff. However I would like to note that three members of the original staff had left, so there is an obvious adjustment to be made. I feel that there is a lack of cohesion and consistency in supervision of the young people some of who are particularly needy and disruptive. However I felt that every member of staff was entirely committed to doing their very best for the young people.

Response from the home

Procedures for responding to young people's use of cannabis have been reviewed and clarified for all staff to ensure a consistent approach.

On record keeping, the records I looked at were in excellent order. I was surprised however, after being told that there had been seven violent incidents, I noted from the previous June to November 16 incidents logged and recorded.

Response from the home

The number of incidents was discussed and clarified at the inspection follow up meeting.

4. Observations on the physical premises

The premises were in reasonable order, various repairs had been made because of a number of incidents from the young people. Beds (with two exceptions in the semi-permanent flat) were unmade. I was particularly concerned by the amount of electrical plugs and extensions in the young people's rooms. This needed to be attended to. A lot of lime scale was seen on the baths and shower units. A lick of paint might not go amiss.

Response from the home

It is agreed that lime scale should not be allowed to build up on baths and shower units.

5. Conclusions

I was concerned by the disillusionment of the staff, and lack of communication on handover. There seems as if there is no uniformed approach in the sanctions applied to the young people, one member of staff would allow a sandwich when requested, another wouldn't, which further inflamed the disruptive behaviour of the young people. While I was there again a WPC called and wasn't checked in the visitors book.

All the staff were aware of the cannabis use of a particular core of young people. Just to talk to them is not doing anything for the young people. On the first morning of the visit things seemed reasonably controlled, however there was a marked disintegration in the afternoon, which continued during the Wednesday visit, which was I understand the 'norm'.

I have to express great concern that things with five of the young people were sometimes terribly wrong, they seemed just about out of control, even with the best efforts of the staff. I also understand that there are a couple of places available which I feel until something is sorted out, would be a disaster. I also felt that more careful placement must be considered for each young person in St Mark's. I understand that Social Services can insist however, if the manager feels it's not appropriate then that's it. I have to say, I was most exercised by what I saw and heard, despite the great efforts of staff. Frankly this is an accident waiting to happen.

On a brighter note, I met two refugee young people, one I had met in 1998 who through the help and support of the staff were making excellent progress.

Response from the home

It is difficult to ensure consistency in applying sanctions, but this will be discussed with the staff team. A strategy to manage drug use by the young people has also been agreed.

Signature of Lay Assessor _____

Name of Lay Assessor **JANE SOUTHWELL**

Date: _____

Maintenance / Health and Safety Issues

- Some form of lighting is needed outside the front door.

Response

This will be done

- Curtains in the young people's lounge are coming off the track and should be rehung.

Response

This has been done

- The wash hand basin in bedroom 3 needs a plug and should be descaled.

Response

This will be done

- The fridges in the bedsit kitchenette and both semi-independent flats urgently require defrosting.

Response

This will be done

- Key workers should check young people's rooms to ensure that electric sockets are not overloaded and all wiring is safe. Any items of electrical equipment brought into the home by young people should be checked for safety.

Response

This will be monitored by key workers

- The corridor and most bedrooms on the first floor would benefit from redecoration.

Response

Redecoration work causes a lot of disruption for young people but the work will be completed as soon as possible.