

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC004085
Inspection date	09/08/2011
Inspector	Maureen Hamer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/03/2011
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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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a short break residential home for children and young people with severe physical and/or learning disabilities. It is run by an independent not-for-profit organisation working to meet the needs of children with physical and learning disabilities. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children or young people at any one time. Day care is also provided.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

This service provides a homely and supportive environment with a motivated staff team who aim to ensure that the children have a safe and enjoyable experience during their short-break visit. Children are cared for by a staff team who have the skills and experience to look after their physical and emotional needs. Children are happy and settled in their environment and they benefit from relationships with members of staff that are positive and enable children to relax. Staff work well with parents and other relevant partners to ensure children's needs are met. Parents expressed their appreciation of the service.

Children are valued as individuals. However, documentation maintained does not always support this. Some aspects of the child's records are not comprehensively completed and updated, particularly regarding risk assessments. Needs assessment and care plans are not always available. In addition, comprehensive quality assurance systems are not in place to identify areas for improvement. The home does not have a policy detailing the use of surveillance equipment including listening monitors and how these promote children's welfare. The recruitment procedures need up-dating in line with new requirements to improve children's safety. Formal supervision is not provided on a regular basis.

The service demonstrates a capacity to improve and has met previous recommendations. There is an enthusiastic and caring staff team that is provided with good training to enable them to meet children's complex needs. In addition the manager has an active approach to seeking to immediately respond to the issues raised in this report.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b))	29/09/2011
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documentation and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child.(Regulation (28) (1) (a))	29/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- revise the recruitment process ensuring that all references are verified (NMS 16.1)
- improve children's records; particularly behaviour support plans and care plans; are up to date, fully document children's assessed needs and how they will be addressed and contribute to an understanding of the child's life (NMS 22)
- ensure that all staff receive regular formal supervision and a record is kept detailing the time, date and length of each supervision (NMS 19.4)
- maintain regular review of risk assessments (NMS 10.8)
- create a written policy where electronic devices are used to monitor children, that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure that children are cared for in line with their individual Placement Plan or Short Break Care Plan. (Care Planning Regulations 2010)
- include a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children are successfully introduced to the home at a pace that they feel comfortable with and this helps them to develop their confidence and trust with the staff. The

service provides a flexible approach to the short-break provided according to the needs of the child.

Children have diverse and complex health needs which are well met. Staff are well trained and demonstrate competence in the care that they provide including undertaking a range of medical procedures as well as intimate personal care that contribute to young people's care needs being well met.

A varied and healthy diet is provided with individual preferences and needs being met. A range of communication aids are used to engage with children to establish their likes and dislikes. This leads to children being provided with food and drink choices that they enjoy and contributes to keeping them healthy. Children are encouraged to develop and maintain independent skills such as dressing, eating and drinking that raise their sense of self-esteem.

The service has a very good relationship with the school so that the needs of young people are communicated between the services and whenever possible young people receive a full-time education. Staff also attend reviews held at the school to report on progress.

Children have access to and participate in a range of social and leisure activities inside and outside of the home and a parent survey states: 'The staff view them as children and young people first, then their disability.' Staff consider what my child will enjoy.' This helps children gain access to a broad range of experiences that they enjoy.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **satisfactory**.

Children receive satisfactory care from staff who respond positively to their needs. Not all files contain placement plans or short-break plans and therefore the staff are not fully aware of the needs of the children. Children's risk assessments are not always in place or up-to-date, which impedes the provision of good quality services and to promoting children's welfare.

Key workers are allocated to children but daily reports are not always comprehensively so some observations of children are not well communicated to all staff to ensure continuity of safe care.

Children respond well to staff whose caring and committed approach helps them to build sound and positive relationships. Interactions were observed to be respectful and maintained children's privacy, with children being relaxed and showing affection towards their carers.

Staff demonstrate a good level of skills in observing non-verbal communication and act in a sensitive and effective manner to reassure children and to access support when children demonstrate distress. Staff work with other professionals to gain a

good understanding of the child's behaviours to contribute to informing the child's care package

Individual choice is ascertained in relation to food and activities. Various methods of communication are used by children and staff who have sufficient knowledge and skills to maintain a total communication approach.

The home's complaints procedure is presented in the Statement of Purpose which is given to parents. The home responds to complaints and act upon lessons learnt from complaints. Parent surveys that have been returned are positive about the service and the care that children receive. One survey response stated: 'The staff treat them as children and young people first.' During the inspection a parent stated, 'the staff are very caring.'

Arrangements for dealing with medication are sound and are managed by trained and experienced staff. Two staff oversee and sign the provision of medication. Some children have complex drug regimes and recently there was an error in provision of medication, following which the child's welfare was not compromised. All relevant partners were informed and appropriate processes have been followed to improve and secure good practice to protect children from harm.

The property is decorated and has overhead tracking and some specialist equipment to assist in delivering personal care. There is a lift which provides access to the first floor, dependant on the numbers and needs of children the lounge and dining area are of a satisfactory size but the corridors do not provide a great deal of space for wheel chair users or for the use of additional walking aids, which can reduce the opportunities for staff to assist children with their mobility aids.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **satisfactory** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Staff are skilled at observing and identifying children's vulnerabilities related to the diverse needs of children with disabilities and take appropriate steps to address them. However, risk assessments are not always completed prior to a child being provided with a short break and some risk assessments are not being regularly updated; this can impact on a child's welfare.

Some children are monitored overnight by waking night staff, the regularity of which is recorded for each child. The service uses listening and camera devices; while there are signed consent forms on children's files, this is not always written into care plans and there is no formal policy in place to guide staff on the appropriate use and management of such devices and how they promote the welfare of children.

Detailed and comprehensive fire risk assessments, equipment checks and evacuation of premises are carried out on a regular basis. However, none have been undertaken in dark conditions which may compromise a child's safety in the event of a fire

occurring at night. The evacuation procedure is written in each child's file, some children have a higher risk than others of incurring a physical injury during an evacuation. While some partners, importantly parents have agreed to the evacuation procedure, not all relevant partners are always engaged in the decision and signed consent is not on children's files.

Good staffing ratios provide a satisfactory level of supervision so that any incidents of any child going missing or incidents of bullying are negated.

Staff report that they receive good comprehensive training including safeguarding, ensuring that children's welfare is promoted. They are aware of reporting procedures in the event of an allegation to ensure children are protected from harm.

Children enjoy safe relationships with staff and the service promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour. There has been one physical restraint which has been recorded and demonstrates protecting a child's welfare. Staff are trained in an approved behaviour management approach. The current behaviour training requirements are being reviewed and will take account of the needs of the whole children group that the home supports.

There are satisfactory systems in place to recruit new staff. However, telephone enquiries are not made to verify all references to ensure that all staff are safe to work with children.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **satisfactory**.

The home is managed by an experienced manager who is held in high regard by staff. The home is regularly monitored to a satisfactory level. Records of children are not always comprehensively completed or up to date and do not show all relevant information required to ensure staff are aware of how to respond to a child's needs. Regulation 34 monitoring is regularly completed; however, while there is some evaluation this is not sufficiently robust to identify all areas in need of improvement. This has led to some elements of practice for example, risk assessments not being comprehensively updated and increasing children's vulnerability.

Staff feel supported by senior staff and benefit from daily handover and the opportunity to attend regular staff meetings. Annual appraisals are currently being completed; however, regular formal supervision is not always undertaken and staffs' support and performance needs are not always identified. The service provides a detailed induction programme which requires new staff to work shadow shifts. Staff report that they find this a very helpful way of learning and developing their confidence and practice to ensure they are competent to care for children with complex needs.

Staffing levels offer two-to-one care and some one-to-one care, enabling a personalised support package. There is a core group of staff in addition to a large

group of bank staff, who provide care to both the home and the domiciliary service. An advantage of this approach is that the same staff may care for children while having respite and are known to them in their own home.

The children's guide does not contain information regarding: the name of the child's Independent Reviewing Officer or Ofsted's details in the event that children or parents may want to raise a concern.

The previous inspection recommended that significant events were evaluated and that all staff had training regarding action to take in the event of an allegation. Both of these recommendations have been met improving protection provided to children in the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.