

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC004085
Inspection date	9 June 2009
Inspector	Stephanie Omosevwerha
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	27 January 2009
--------------------------------	-----------------

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a short stay residential home for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities. It is run by a local charitable organisation. The home provides care to meet the child's and young person's physical, social and emotional needs during their stay. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children at any one time. Day care is also provided.

The home is sited in a residential area and accommodation is arranged over two floors. The house offers five bedrooms, one which is a double room, on the first floor and communal areas on the ground floor consisting of a lounge, dining room/conservatory and kitchen. The first floor does not have wider hallways or doors, which can make it difficult to move children that use a wheelchair. Suitably adapted bathroom and toilet facilities are available on both floors. A lift is provided between floors. The home has a front garden, which provides access to the home and a rear garden used for the children's play.

Due to the reduction in occupancy levels, the home closes on certain days each week, unless there are planned bookings or it is a school holiday. When children are accommodated in the home there are at least two members of staff on each shift. At night there is one waking and one sleep in member of staff.

At the time of this inspection, six children were being cared for in the home. Five were staying overnight and one was being provided with day care.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection of the home focussing on all the key national minimum standards. One action and one recommendation, concerning monitoring visits and an annual development plan, were also followed up.

The home provides a good standard of care to children accommodated there. The home offers a valuable respite service that provides children with a positive experience away from home. The home fosters excellent relationships with parents and other key professionals, such as school and healthcare professionals, to ensure children benefit from a co-ordinated and consistent approach to their care. Children are cared for by an enthusiastic and motivated staff team whose skills are well matched to the children's needs. The home promotes an open ethos to encourage dialogue between children, parents and other interested parties to ensure the service continues to meet needs and develops according to future demands.

Two requirements and two recommendations were made at this inspection. These concerned updating the gas safety certificate, monitoring visits coinciding with when children are present in the home, recording times of fire drills and staff recruitment records.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last interim inspection of the home made one requirement and one recommendation, both of which have been addressed.

Written reports are now available in the home, demonstrating that monthly monitoring visits are being undertaken by the registered provider.

Written development plans have been compiled including information provided from feedback given by parents. This clearly identifies forthcoming plans concerning the home's operation over the forthcoming year.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are provided with balanced meals that meet all their dietary requirements. The home is able to provide for some very specialist dietary needs including tube feeding. Due to individual nutritional needs and children staying only for short respite breaks, menus have to be extremely flexible. Staff undertake the cooking so they can cater for likes and dislikes and ensure specific preferences are met. Staff encourage children's social and practical skills when eating and promote positive behaviour at the table.

Children's good health is promoted and detailed plans clearly identify both routine and specific health needs. Staff are knowledgeable about individual needs and are competent in providing the support for children including those with complex health care needs. Staff have excellent links with local community nurses who oversee staff training and ensure they are competent to carry out specific tasks such as tube feeding, oral suction and follow the correct protocols for epileptic seizures. The home offers respite care so the responsibilities for arranging healthcare appointments remains with the parents or carers.

Children are safeguarded by excellent procedures for the management and administration of medication. The home deals with large numbers of medication coming in and out of the home and has developed highly effective procedures to monitor this. Medication is kept securely and accurate records are kept of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff maintain a sensitive balance between promoting children's dignity and privacy with the need to provide appropriate care as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child. This is particularly important when providing care of a personal nature and good procedural guidelines are in place to support staff carrying out the provision of intimate care. Further issues concerning confidentiality are also appropriately addressed, such as information sharing, entry to children's rooms and personal possessions so staff are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Children are protected by the home's open ethos which allows concerns to be raised at early stages to ensure they are properly addressed. The manager takes the responsibility of informing other agencies of any issues seriously and ensures any concerns are reported so they can be investigated where necessary. All parents and other interested parties are given information about the complaints procedure and records show that all complaints are promptly dealt with to ensure they are resolved quickly.

Children are kept safe by clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns. Staff are vigilant in monitoring children and understand their responsibilities for recognising and

reporting any concerns or suspicions. Good links are established with the local safeguarding board ensuring a prompt response or action when required.

Children are cared for in a safe and nurturing environment. Due to the nature of children accommodated bullying is normally identified in the context of other behaviours, such as children who may potentially bite, scratch or hit out. These behaviours are usually dealt with by behaviour management strategies. Careful consideration is given prior to admission to ensure the right mix of children in respite care, to avoid those who are particularly vulnerable due to physical disabilities being put at risk.

Children are extremely unlikely to go missing due to robust security measures both in the home and out in the community. High staffing levels ensure children are appropriately supervised and protected at all times. Records confirm no incidents have taken place, although procedures are in place for staff to follow in the unlikely event that a child should go missing.

Children accommodated in the home have predominantly significant health needs and only a small minority present challenging behaviours. These are clearly indicated on individual care plans that give staff strategies of working with children who may present challenges. Records show that no restraints or sanctions have been used in the home since the last inspection and there have only been a very low number of incidents involving aggression. Staff work positively with children encouraging socially acceptable behaviour effectively using praise and rewards to promote good behaviour.

The home generally provides a safe environment that is suitably maintained with all servicing and checks being up-to-date apart from the gas installations which were overdue an inspection. A range of risk assessments are carried out to manage and minimise potential hazards to children both in the home and out in the community. Staff demonstrate an awareness of safety procedures and receive training to ensure good working practices.

Children are suitably safeguarded by the home's recruitment procedures that ensures staff are carefully selected and vetted. Records do not always demonstrate, however, when verbal verification of references have been carried out, particularly when a member of staff has worked previously with children or vulnerable adults. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to monitor visitors to the home in the interests of the safety and welfare of all children provided with care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are given individualised support and receive the help and guidance they need. Care plans detail specific needs to ensure each child is provided with the necessary services in relation to their gender, disability, religious, racial or cultural background. Children are supported to develop their personal and social skills and take part in activities both in the home and the local community. Staff support children with communication difficulties and use a range of methods to enhance understanding, such as signing, pictures and symbols. The home links appropriately with external agencies supporting the children, although the main responsibility for this remains with the parents as the home offers short term respite care.

Children's education is actively promoted during their respite stays, although the main responsibilities for education needs remain with the children's parents. The home has strong links with local schools and developed effective communication to ensure consistency of working.

This includes holding key information on children's files, attending joint reviews and key workers visiting children's schools.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have their needs effectively assessed and detailed placement plans outline all aspects of their care and how this will be implemented in the home. Parents are encouraged to participate fully in this process to ensure plans are kept up-to-date and staff are aware of any important changes. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of children's care needs and are particularly good at making sure children with communication difficulties are provided with help to become actively involved in making decisions. The home has developed excellent systems for reviewing care, such as regular communication with parents and keyworkers monitoring and updating care plans. Statutory reviews are held at the required intervals with parents, staff from the home, social workers and other involved professionals attending and contributing to the process.

Staff work closely with children's families, although as the home offers respite care to give families a break from their caring role they do not routinely visit during children's short stays. Staff regularly speak with parents and communications books are used to inform families about their child's stay. The home always seeks to promote good relationships and encourage parents to visit for special occasions such as open days.

Sensitive planning enhances children's experiences of moving into and leaving the home. Clear procedures are in place for introducing children to the home including the opportunity for short visits and day care provision prior to staying overnight. Introductory visits are set up on an individual basis to ensure these are tailored to each child's needs. Emergency admissions can be accommodated but only if children meet the home's admission criteria and one to one funding is agreed. Staff liaise appropriately with other professionals when children are moving on to adult provisions and work hard to achieve positive transitions.

Children are supported to express their views, opinions and wishes. Care practices in the home ensure children have opportunities to make everyday choices about things that effect them, such as food choices and activities. Staff are involved in a pilot scheme taking place over the summer holidays designed to listen to children who are unable to communicate verbally using various means, including video, photo and written contributions. Parents were also consulted formally at the beginning of the year and this information was taken into account when setting up the development plan for the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are supported with their transitions to adult services. Staff liaise with placing authorities to ensure they are aware of future plans and take an active role in preparing children for their move towards adulthood. Due to the length of respite stays, it is difficult to implement full programmes designed to work towards more independent care, although staff encourage young people to use and develop their skills as much as they are able.

Children are provided with a environment that is appropriately maintained and adequately furnished and decorated. The ground floor meets the home's stated purpose, which is to provide respite to children with physical and learning disabilities. Specialist equipment is provided where

necessary such as hoists, lifts and adapted baths. The first floor does not have wider hallways and doors, however, which can make it difficult to move children who use a wheelchair. Children are accommodated in single rooms, apart from one double bedroom, and there is ample communal space including an attractive garden area where children can play.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information is available to parents and other interested parties in a Statement of Purpose that is regularly up-dated to reflect any changes to the organisation of the home or the services provided. A children's guide is available in accessible format using pictures and symbols to make more attractive and understandable to children.

Children receive the care they need from a competent staff team with a diverse range of background experience. Shifts are well organised with a senior member of staff always available to provide support and assistance. Staff have good opportunities for training particularly to ensure they have skills needed to look after the group of children cared for in the home. Individual training records are kept for each member of staff, although these are not currently collated to provide an overview of staff training in the home. Arrangements for staffing the home are flexible with a minimum of two children to one member of staff at all times and additional staffing provided according to individual need when indicated on the child's care plan. Children always have a member of staff responsible for them during their stay to ensure they receive the care and attention they require. The home have been able to achieve a good level of continuity in the staff team ensuring children are able to form positive attachments with members of staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children's care plans fully assess their individual needs including those relating to their gender, disability, religious and cultural backgrounds. Staff know children well and ensure they receive a personal service according to their needs. Specific health needs are well met and intimate care is carried out in a way that promotes the child's dignity and choice. Staff take time to listen to children, particularly those with communication difficulties and use different formats such as signs, symbols and pictures to aid understanding. Children are encouraged to access the local community and take part in social and leisure activities.

Children's welfare is regularly monitored to ensure they make good progress in the home and enjoy their stays. Effective communication between staff and parents ensures care plans are kept up-to-date. The registered manager regularly reviews all aspects of the service to ensure standards are being maintained and improved where necessary. Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken, however, these are not carried out at times when children are present in the home, which does not reflect an authentic opinion of care standards. Feedback from parents and stakeholder views are used effectively and incorporated into future service development plans.

Children's files meet with statutory requirements and provide an accurate reflection of children's development and progress during their respite stays.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
26	ensure that all parts of the home are safe and hazard free, specifically to ensure that an up-to-date gas safety certificate is in place (Regulation 23 a).	30 June 2009
32	ensure monitoring visits take place when children are present in the home to form an accurate opinion of their welfare and standards of care provided (Regulation 33 4 a).	31 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- include the time that fire drills take place to show that they are taking place at different times of day (NMS 26.8)
- ensure written recruitment records contain full information concerning gaps in employment and verification of why employment ended when the position involved work with children or vulnerable adults (NMS 27.1).