

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC013828
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Inspector	Paula Eaton
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	12 December 2008
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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.

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

This children's home provides short-term care for up to six children with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities, from birth to 14 years of age. The home is located on a multi-purpose site and operated by a large charitable organisation managed by a Board of Trustees.

The facilities are set in single level, purpose built accommodation. There are six single occupancy bedrooms available. There is a communal lounge and dining area, and a soft play area available, as well as decking and garden space for use by the children. The facilities have been designed with the specific needs of the children in mind.

Some parking is available a short distance away from the home, however, a driveway with a turn around point allows safe access to the home for children arriving and leaving.

Staff were observed interacting with four children who were staying at the home on the evening of the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service with some outstanding features. Excellent systems are in place to ensure that the individual needs of children are assessed and met. Positive relationships are formed between staff and children and the views of families are respected and considered in planning care for children. The service provides meaningful activities and experiences for children encouraging them to develop skills and reach their potential.

Robust recording and monitoring systems are in place and the Registered Manager is continuously developing and improving the service to ensure that children and their families experience a good quality service that provides a safe and secure environment.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure that fire drills and fire safety checks were completed at the required intervals. Records show that these checks are now taking place and the Registered Manager has taken this a step further by reviewing fire safety policies and procedures involving the local fire officer to ensure that the most effective arrangements are in place to protect children in the event of a fire.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a healthy choice of food that considers their individual dietary needs as well as their likes and dislikes. Careful consideration is given to ensuring that all staff are aware of any special dietary requirements or restrictions that children have including any specific preparation of food that is needed. Mealtimes are social occasions and children are supported to be as independent as possible with the aid of specialist cutlery and crockery that meets their individual needs.

As the home is a short breaks unit parents retain responsibility for the health of their children. However, there are good systems in place for considering and meeting the health needs of children during their stay at the home. Health needs are considered during the referral process and then included in the child's care plan entitled 'All About Me'. This then informs staff about the needs of children in preparation for and during their stay at the unit and any important health information such as allergies is highlighted at the front of the document as well as in the section relating to health.

The unit has appropriate equipment, aids and adaptations in place to support children and enable staff to care for them safely. Staff receive clear guidance and specific training on managing particular medical conditions such as epilepsy which ensures that health matters are responded to effectively.

Clear procedures are followed for the management and administration of medication and appropriate records are kept. A training profile detailing mandatory and additional health care training further supports promoting the good health and well-being of children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of children is respected. Staff perform personal care tasks for children in a sensitive manner encouraging children to be as independent as possible. Moving and handling training is provided for all staff to ensure that children with mobility difficulties are assisted safely. Staff understand the need to treat information in a sensitive manner which includes an awareness of when information needs to be passed on to protect children.

The level of complaints for the service is low. Parents and carers are made aware of how to complain and relationships between staff and parents are positive, generally supporting the informal resolution of any concerns that they have. Robust child protection policies and procedures are in place. Staff receive safeguarding training to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities with regard to protecting the welfare of children and reporting any concerns they may have. Bullying is rare within the unit and difficulties that do arise between children are usually as a result of challenging behaviour exhibited and not bullying. Children are closely monitored and therefore any impact of challenging behaviour on children is minimised. Individual guidelines are in place including a risk assessment for any children who are likely to try to abscond from the unit. In addition to this children are closely supervised and good security systems are in place as the children who use the service are very vulnerable and have complex needs. As a result of this occurrences of children absconding are very rare.

Staff build positive relationships with children and respond to unacceptable behaviour constructively avoiding the need for any form of physical restraint. A good understanding of children's communication needs including non verbal cues ensures that staff are able to respond promptly to any signs of distress or deterioration in behaviour. This limits the impact of any difficult behaviour on other children and staff. Records relating to any incidents are monitored by the Registered Manager and behaviour management plans are included in children's care plans.

Health and safety issues are taken seriously and robust systems are in place to ensure that the environment is safe and secure for children at all times. This includes comprehensive fire safety policies and procedures that have been recently reviewed and improved.

Comprehensive recruitment policies and procedures are in place and all the required recruitment checks are carried out prior to a member of staff commencing work at the unit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Care plans clearly document the individual needs of children and the actions staff must take to meet their needs. This includes detailed information outlining any religious or cultural needs such as dietary restrictions and health considerations. Careful consideration is given to each child's communication needs to ensure that they are able to make their feelings and wishes known and each child is allocated a key worker. In addition to this each individual shift plan takes account of the needs and preferences of each child that is going to be using the service during that time. Individual risk assessments are also completed for each child so that any identified risks are minimised whilst still allowing children to take controlled risks, develop skills and encouraging them to enjoy new experiences.

Parents and carers retain responsibility for the education of their children, however, staff at the unit do maintain links with educational establishments and comment on the progress and achievement of children whilst staying at the unit. These links are also used to maintain consistency of approach with regards to meeting a child's needs, for example when responding to challenging behaviour. Staff continuously encourage children to be as independent as possible and support them to develop new skills.

A range of stimulating activities are available for children. Activities are arranged in advance to ensure that they meet the needs of the children who will be using the service at the time. An excellent range of toys and equipment provide appropriate stimulation and enjoyment for children in the home. This includes a soft play area and outdoor equipment and a sensory board as well as toys, games and books. Staff work hard to engage children in meaningful activities that support their development as well as taking account of their likes and dislikes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each child's needs are assessed and a care plan developed prior to them attending the unit. This 'All about me' document is actively used by members of staff when children are attending the unit to ensure they are clear about the needs of children and how to meet them. The Registered Manager monitors children's care plans and ensures that they are updated as required and each child's key worker takes responsibility for updating care plans and liaising with other professionals and the child's parents. Staff contribute to statutory reviews as required.

Families are able to maintain contact with their children whilst they are staying at the unit if they wish to do so and any contact made is recorded. Detailed information about the level of contact a family expects during their child's stay is recorded such as notification in the event of illness. Any restrictions on contact whilst children are staying at the unit are also clearly documented in their care plans.

Clear procedures are in place in relation to moving in and leaving the home. As a short breaks service admissions are usually planned and involve several visits to the service to allow children to become familiar with the environment prior to them staying overnight. Parents are encouraged

to be involved in this process and are encouraged to stay with their children during the initial visits to the service.

The unit regularly consults with parents and carers on an informal basis and arranges an annual fun day for families to allow parents and carers to meet all the staff and raise any issues they have and make suggestions about the service provided. Letters are sent out to keep parents and carers informed of any events or changes to the service provided. Clear information about communication methods is recorded for each child to enable them to make themselves understood by staff and their needs and wishes known.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Due to the nature of their disabilities it is unlikely that the children who use the service will ever live independently. However, staff at the home strive to develop the skills of individual children and encourage them to become as independent as possible so that they can make choices and be involved in every day decision making during their stay.

The unit is located on a multi-purpose site in a quiet residential area. The unit is purpose built and maintained to a very high standard and is equipped with appropriate aids and adaptations to meet the needs of the children who use the unit. There are good bathroom facilities in the unit that are also appropriately equipped to meet the needs of children and the staff assisting them.

The furnishings and décor are of an excellent standard and there are pictures on the walls including large photographs of individual children engaged in activities. Maintenance issues are addressed promptly and robust monitoring systems ensure that any problems are identified. The unit has a large outdoor play area to the rear of the property with outdoor play equipment for children to use.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose for the home is an informative document that contains all of the required information and is regularly reviewed and updated. It is available to parents, carers, children and visitors to the unit.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The service is tailored to meet the individual needs of children and staff strive to ensure that individual needs, preferences, likes and dislikes of children are considered at all times.

Excellent systems are in place to ensure that staff have the skills to meet the needs of children. Staff are well managed and supported. There is sufficiency of staffing with staffing ratios increased if the need for this has been assessed. The current review of staff's working patterns has been effective in minimising the use of agency staff therefore promoting continuity of care. The ongoing training programme and the recent recruitment of a nurse trainer ensure that training is being given high priority. Very high levels of staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification (level 3) and additional training is provided to meet the specific needs of individual children where required.

Robust monitoring systems are in place to ensure that records are kept up to date and reviewed as needed. This includes children's case records which contain all of the required information. The organisation monitors the operation of the home but the Registered Manager has also worked hard to introduce monitoring systems to ensure that the unit is operating effectively and meeting the needs children.

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
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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.