

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Eaton
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Date of last inspection	16 February 2010
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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 turnaround point allows safe access to the home for children arriving and leaving.

Staff were observed interacting with the children who were staying at the home on the day of the inspection and one child was spoken to.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service that is continually developing and improving. The service benefits from the experience and skills of a very child focused staff team. The management team also strive to maintain and improve standards on an ongoing basis.

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. This ensures that children and their families experience a good quality service that provides a safe and secure environment.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from a healthy balanced diet that takes into consideration 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. This includes any specific preparation of food that is needed or religious and cultural needs. 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. Clear information using symbols and pictures is displayed in the communal areas of the home. This enables children to

see what is being prepared at mealtimes. Food safety training has recently been provided for staff and only those who have this training are able to prepare food. This training has also led to the introduction of improved food hygiene measures and cleaning schedules that are closely monitored.

Being a short breaks service, parents retain responsibility for meeting the healthcare needs of their children. However, there are robust systems in place for attending to the health needs of children during their stay. Health needs are considered prior to admission and included in care plans. These plans inform staff about any healthcare issues that they need to be aware of during the child's stay and includes information about allergies and any considerations to be made regarding treatment in an emergency. The Registered Manager has introduced a new hospital sheet that contains all the necessary information that would be required by medical staff if a child should need to go to hospital. The sheets include information such as the child's communication needs, their mobility and any dietary needs as well as their medical needs.

Sound systems for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication also promote the good health and well being of children. Staff receive medication awareness training and also participate in training that enables them to administer treatment in relation to conditions such as epilepsy and to manage gastrostomy feeding.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are afforded privacy and their dignity is respected. Staff support children with personal care tasks in a sensitive manner encouraging them to be as independent as possible. Staff also receive appropriate moving and handling training to ensure that they can safely transfer children. 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 very low. Complaints procedures are readily available to parents and clearly displayed in a child friendly format in communal areas of the service for children. The Registered Manager has also developed a complaints form for children that uses pictures and symbols. This is given to parents when their child first starts using the service so that they have a copy should they need it. Parents are aware that they can approach staff or the Registered Manager if they have any concerns. There is also an 'open' atmosphere within the home that facilitates this. Staff build positive relationships with parents and carers which also supports good communication and promotes early resolution of any concerns.

Robust child protection policies and procedures are in place. Staff receive regular safeguarding training to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities with regard to protecting the welfare of children and reporting any concerns that they may have. There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. However, incidents of bullying are very rare. There are high staffing levels within the service and relationships between children are closely monitored. Any incidents that do occur between children are usually as a result of challenging behaviour rather than bullying. Close supervision of children ensures that any impact of challenging behaviour is minimised.

Individual guidelines are in place including a risk assessment for any children who are likely to be absent without authority from the service. In addition to this, young people are closely supervised and there are good security systems in place. The children who use the service

benefit from these systems because they are very vulnerable and have complex needs. As a result of this, occurrences of children going missing 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. This 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. Each young person's care plan includes detailed information regarding any difficult behaviours. This includes triggers for these behaviours and any action staff should take to reduce incidents and minimise the impact of behaviour. This information is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in the needs of children. Records relating to any incidents are monitored by the Registered Manager and Regulation 33 visitor.

Health and safety issues are taken seriously and there are robust systems in place to ensure that the environment is safe and secure for children at all times. Fire safety policies and procedures are comprehensive taking into account recommendations made by the fire service. All the required checks of fire safety equipment take place at regular intervals including regular fire drills. Detailed accident records are maintained and an accident analysis is completed on a quarterly basis. Monthly health and safety inspections of the service are also carried out. These include the monitoring of incident reports, notifications and medication systems as well as the environment.

Robust 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. Staff take the time to find out about the cultural backgrounds of children who use the service. In doing so, they have borrowed books from the library to gain an insight into different cultures and faiths. Careful consideration is given to each child's communication needs to ensure that they are able to make their feelings and wishes known. For example, symbols and pictures have been developed for basic words in a different language for one particular child. Each child is allocated a key worker and 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. This enables children to take controlled risks, develop skills and encourages them to enjoy new experiences.

Parents and carers retain responsibility for the education of their children. However, staff maintain links with educational establishments and comment on the progress and achievement of children who use the service. 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. There is educational material displayed in communal areas.

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 and take into consideration their likes and dislikes. Activities for each day are listed using pictures and symbols on boards in communal areas. 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. Timetables of activities are arranged for holiday times and given to parents and children. The Easter timetable included lots of themed activities such as an Easter egg hunt, making Easter baskets and making paper plate bunnies as well as a farm trip and circus skills. At the time of the inspection children were enjoying taking part in activities using a World Cup theme which included decorating flags.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Detailed information is gathered prior to a child being admitted to the service and a comprehensive care plan called the 'All about me' document is developed. This ensures that staff are equipped to meet the needs of children. Care plans are very detailed and are working documents that are updated regularly as the needs of children change. The Registered Manager monitors care plans 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.

Children are supported to maintain contact with their families according to their wishes and that of their parents. Detailed information is recorded about the level of contact that takes place during a child's stay including notifications such as when a child becomes ill. In addition to this, staff manage homesickness sensitively and support children to have contact with parents prior to bedtime. This is done either by telephone or email to reassure and comfort them if necessary. Any restrictions on contact while children are staying at the home 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. This allows 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. When a child is due to leave the service, staff prepare scrap books for them with photographs and pieces of work the child has completed during their time at the service. Staff also add comments so that the child has a souvenir from their stay and a record of significant memories.

The service regularly consults with parents and carers on an informal basis and arranges an annual fun day for families. This is an opportunity for 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. In doing so, children can make choices and be involved in every day decision making during their stay.

The home is located on a multi-purpose site in a quiet residential area. The home is purpose built and maintained to a very high standard. It is equipped with appropriate aids and adaptations to meet the needs of the children who use the service. There are good bathroom facilities 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 home has a large outdoor play area to the rear of the property with outdoor play equipment for children to use. Since the last inspection a mural of a fairy castle, fairies, flowers and bumble bees has been painted on the walls of one of the bedrooms. It provides a bright, colourful and welcoming environment for children. Another room has a lighthouse painted on the wall and another has a football theme. In addition to this a mural of a sky scene with clouds, balloons and an aeroplane has also recently been painted on the ceiling of the soft play area.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

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 home. There is also a child friendly children's guide in place that has been developed using pictures and symbols to meet the needs of the children who use the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The service is tailored to meet the individual needs of children. 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 are sufficient staff, with staffing ratios increased if the need for this has been assessed. Staff working patterns are effective in minimising the use of agency staff and therefore promoting continuity of care. The ongoing training programme and the nurse trainer employed by the organisation ensure that training is being given high priority. Very high levels of staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. Additional training is provided for staff 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. The Registered Manager also has monitoring systems in place to ensure that the service is operating effectively and meeting the needs of the 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.