

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Rossella Volpi
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 home is run by a voluntary organisation. Its purpose is to provide long-term care and support within a homely environment to a maximum of four children or young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years, who have severe learning or physical disabilities or both. The service aims to offer positive everyday life experiences in a safe environment and support the young people to exercise choice in their lives.

The accommodation is a large detached bungalow set in a residential area. Adaptations have been made to the building to meet the needs of the young people placed. There is parking space at the front and a large garden with play equipment at the rear.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection. It looked at progress made in meeting actions and recommendations from the previous inspection and assessed the outcomes in the area of staying safe, taking into account the relevant key national minimum standards.

The welfare of children and young people is promoted. Young people convey a feeling of being relaxed and enjoy warm relationships with the staff team. Staff support young people to communicate their needs and, to this end, carefully assess the reasons for behaviour. Appropriate staffing ratios, training and staff's vigilance protect young people from bullying and minimise the risk of them being absent without authority.

Recommendations are made regarding training in child protection and health records.

Improvements since the last inspection

The report of the previous inspection, conducted in September 2010, details three actions and one recommendation, which have all been acted upon.

Outstanding placement plans for young people accommodated at the home have been received and the manager has informed the relevant authorities that placements can only be agreed after receipt of the appropriate information, to enable a proper care plan to be put in place.

A record of measures of control used, to manage behaviour, is being kept.

The reports completed following the statutory monthly visits conducted on behalf of the provider are now sent to Ofsted.

The manager has made enquiries to funding authorities for staff to attend the child protection training that they provide; however, the recommendation is repeated because the training has not yet taken place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a dedicated staff team that has succeeded in establishing good relationships with them; that demonstrates a strong commitment to support young people well and helps them to communicate their needs. Young people convey a feeling of being relaxed and at ease with staff, showing pleasure in their company and affection towards them.

Families and placing social workers are satisfied with the service received; the outcome of care plan reviews confirm that young people are benefiting from the placement.

Staff respect the young people's privacy and promote their dignity, with particular attention being given to gender and cultural issues when providing personal care. The living arrangements include enough private and communal space and staff ensure that young people are able to relax with staff and peers or have quiet space if they want it.

There are sound recruitment practices and vetting of staff that are being used in the current selection of new carers, to both assess competency for the job and to minimise the risk of young people being exposed to potential abusers. Equality and diversity are promoted in the recruitment process.

Periodic health and safety checks are conducted to monitor that the premises continue to offer physical safety and security; not all risk assessments recorded show when they were last reviewed or when identified actions were addressed.

There have been no formal complaints from families or other stakeholders since the last two inspections; instead, more compliments have been received by the manager about the service provided.

The manager has continued to liaise with families, placing social workers and other relevant people; to ascertain their views and so guide how the service may improve.

Staff are aware of their role in supporting families to express concerns and of the importance of prompt and full responses. The new children's guide being completed in pictorial form aims to illustrate what can be expected from the service and inform of the right to raise concerns if unhappy. The young people have limited or no verbal means of communication, but management is alert to incidents of unacceptable behaviour that may be an expression of discontent or frustration.

Overall staff manage behaviour well and expectations are based on young people's individual needs and levels of understanding. Sanctions are not usually imposed for the majority of young people. When disciplinary measures are taken a record is kept. This details, for example, when time out from an activity was deemed necessary to give the young person time to calm down or other steps to manage inappropriate behaviour. The individual entries are variable in quality in that some are not clearly legible and not all are signed.

There are procedures and regular training to ensure that staff are aware of how to protect young people and how to respond to allegations of abuse. Staff had raised that the recent emphasis on individual learning accessed from a computer did not meet their needs well, in relation to guiding them in safeguarding non verbal young people with complex needs. Staff found that they missed the challenge and learning that an external trainer or sharing ideas with people from other environments would bring; particularly as most members of staff have worked together for years. The manager is taking steps to address this now, as discussed above under the section entitled: 'Improvements'.

Staff are aware of young people's vulnerability should they go missing from the home or on trips and appropriate steps have been taken to reduce risk. There have been no incidents of young people being absent without authority for about three years.

The appropriate staffing levels in the home and staff vigilance, as well as the excellent relationships with schools, minimise the possibility of bullying taking place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the provision of training for staff in safeguarding meets their needs (NMS 17)
- ensure that records of sanctions imposed are legible and signed (NMS 22)
- evidence that risk assessments are current by ensuring that they are dated and signed. (NMS 26)