

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC029950
Inspection date	30 June 2010
Inspector	David Kidner
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	26 October 2009
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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

The home is registered to provide a home and a short break service for up to nine children of both sexes between the ages of 8 years and 18 years of age who have a learning disability. Some children have complex support needs and require support in everyday life and activities. At the time of the inspection two children live permanently at the home.

This home is a detached period property set within with extensive grounds in a village setting. To the ground floor there are a number of communal areas that offer living space, dining facilities, recreational and leisure opportunities. There are adapted bathing, showering and toilet facilities to meet the needs of children and young people who use wheelchairs and have some mobility needs. There are nine single bedrooms situated on the first floor and some of the bedrooms have overhead tracking fitted to meet the specific needs of some children. There is a second fully adapted bathroom and toilet facilities to this floor. The first floor is accessed by a lift and there are mobile hoist and adapted equipment to meet specific needs.

The home has a large garden area offering ample play areas and a covered play area. There is transport provided to take children and young people on social and leisure activities.

Summary

The service provides a permanent home to two children and currently offers a short break service to 23 children and their families.

This was an unannounced full inspection. At this inspection all key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups were assessed.

The home continues to provide a safe and caring environment to children and young people accessing a short break service, and who live there permanently. Detailed placement plans identify how individual needs are to be met and if the home has adaptations and aids to meet individual needs. There is a dedicated, well trained and experienced care team who strive to provide a high quality service. Staff are trained by appropriate health care professionals to conduct specific health care tasks. Ofsted has received very positive comments about the service from parents and social workers.

Following this inspection one action and five recommendations have been made relating to staff supervision and appraisal, the monitoring of some health care needs, menus, staffing levels in relation to activities and the recoding of staff training.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home now ensures that the electronic beds are serviced on a regular basis. Emergency lighting also has a routine service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home provides varied, nutritious and healthy home cooked meals. Menus include meals from different cultures. The menus are based on the known likes and dislikes of children. Some children have specialist dietary needs that the home is able to meet. However, the menus do not demonstrate what is served at breakfast. The home strives to promote family style mealtimes and there are two dining areas in order to managed mealtimes more effectively. Young people are encouraged to make choices and are able to have alternative meals if they so wish. Children spoken with stated that they really like the food provided. The home has adapted equipment to meet individual eating and drinking needs. Staff receive training in food hygiene.

The service clearly identifies the health care needs of the children who permanently reside at the home and health care plans are developed and are regularly reviewed. However, it was noted that some immunisation records and weight monitoring records are not up to date. Due to the nature of the service, the parents of the children who access for short breaks, address the healthcare needs of their child. However, the home is proactive in supporting parents if needed. Some children have complex support needs and the home ensures that the care team have the skills to support children in this area. This is achieved by obtaining training from the appropriate health care professional. The service is extremely supportive to children and their families if admission to hospital is required. Consents have been obtained where appropriate. Staff receive first aid training.

The home has robust procedures for the management of medicines. All staff sign their awareness of the procedures and these are also detailed in the staff handbook.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy and confidentiality is promoted. Care staff are very vigilant to ensure privacy and dignity is maintained when supporting children with intimate care needs. Bathing, showering and toilet facilities have been adapted to meet the needs of the children. There is also a variety of overhead electronic hoists and mobile hoists to aid moving and handling. There are plans to refurbish the main downstairs bathroom.

The service has a detailed complaints procedure. There has been five recorded complaints since the last inspection. Documentation viewed and discussions held, evidence that all the complaints have been resolved to a satisfactory level.

The welfare of children is promoted and there are robust systems to safeguard children. There have not been any matters relating to child protection. Staff receive safeguarding training at induction and refresher training is provided as and when needed. Interviews with staff demonstrated their awareness of safeguarding procedures. Bullying and absence without authority are not concerns at the home. The service notifies the appropriate authorities of any significant events in the home.

There are policies and procedures in relation to sanctions, behaviour management and the use of physical intervention. Sanctions are not imposed. Detailed records are kept of the use of physical intervention and these are audited by the Registered Manager. The home develops individual behaviour management guidelines to assist staff in managing particular behaviours. Staff are very aware of the need to ensure continuity and consistency in this area and discuss such matters at team meeting. Staff receive training in de-escalation and restraint.

The home is proactive in promoting health and safety and fire safety. Electronic beds and the emergency lighting are now serviced regularly.

The service has a robust staff recruitment and selection procedure. Staff do not commence employment at the home until a satisfactory enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check has been obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home ensures that children receive very individualised support. The placement plans are detailed and identify areas of significant risk. Some children use different methods of communication to express their needs, likes and dislikes. The care staff are very aware of the children's needs in relation to this and use alternative methods of communication. However, menus are not presented in an appropriate format for some children to be able to make an informed choice of what meals and alternatives are available. The home also uses a communication board so children are aware of the staff that are on duty. At the time of the inspection this facility was in the process of being updated.

Children are fully supported to access school. The home strives to promote good links between parents and the school. In doing so, communication books are used for each child between school, the child's permanent home and the service. Personal education plans have been developed for the children who permanently live at the home.

The home has an abundance of toys, games, books and leisure equipment. There is a snoozelem, indoor soft play area, art room, computer room and outside play areas. Transport is available to take children on trips out, visit to shops and walks. However, feedback from interested stakeholders have highlighted that in recent times, children have not had many opportunities to access leisure and social activities outside of the home environment. This is due to staffing levels and the availability of staff who can drive the home's vehicle. This was discussed with the Registered Manager and has been highlighted under the outcome 'organisation'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home develops comprehensive and very individualised placement plans to ensure individual needs are identified and how these are to be met. The placement plans are known as CHIPS. These are regularly monitored by the key worker. Some CHIPS have been signed by the child's parent or social worker. Statutory reviews take place as needed with outcomes kept.

All referrals to the home are from the local authority. There are protocols in place for children and their parents to visit the home to meet other children and care staff prior to accessing the service. The home accepts emergency admissions. The home does not hold formal house meetings but seeks the views, opinions of the children on a day-to-day basis.

Children enjoy sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect. Staff are able to set boundaries for children in relation to acceptable behaviour and the management of behaviours are regularly discussed in order to promote a consistent approach. Staff were observed to be interacting with children in a very caring and supporting manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home has suitable aids, adaptations and specialist furniture and equipment to meet the needs of the children who access the service. There is a passenger lift to access the first floor.

The home is a detached period property in a rural location and set in its own extensive grounds. It is close to a village centre with some local facilities. The service ensures that the property is in a good state of structural repair and addresses maintenance issues promptly, in order to promote a safe environment. At the time of the inspection new radiators were being installed throughout the home. Due to the nature of the service the environment is subject to considerable wear and tear. The care team make every effort to provide a homely environment. However, some areas of the home require redecoration and refurbishment in order to promote a homely and child friendly environment.

Bedrooms of the children who live permanently at the home are well presented and provide facilities to meet their individual needs. The service makes every effort to ensure that those children who access the home for short term breaks usually sleep in the same bedroom.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Placement plans clearly identify children's needs in relation to their cultural and religious needs. The home provides specialist diets and meals from different countries are promoted. There are aids and adaptations around the home to meet the individual and collective needs of the children and young people. All staff attend training in equality and diversity.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that sets out the service's aims and objectives and the services that it provides. Children are provided with a children's guide that is presented in an accessible format. The service also provides a parent's guide.

Staff do not receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. This was highlighted at the last inspection and has not been fully addressed. Staff meetings occur on a regular basis with an agenda and detailed minutes kept.

The home has clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager. There are four team leaders and an on-call rota. The service is very committed in ensuring that it has a well qualified workforce. A senior member of staff is responsible for coordinating staff accessing a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). At present 19 of the 24 care staff have a minimum of NVQ level 3 qualification in Caring for Children and Young people, some staff have obtained Level 4. Five care staff are currently undertaking this qualification.

The service has a staff training and development plan. However, staff training records are not maintained to demonstrate the training that individual staff have undertaken. The Registered Manager stated that all staff undertake mandatory training and refresher training including, safeguarding, de-escalation and restraint, first aid and food hygiene. Staff have also undertaken specialist training from appropriate health care professionals.

Discussions with staff and the Registered Manager confirmed that there are adequate numbers of staff on duty to meet the individual and collective needs of the children accessing the service. This has been achieved by staff working extra hours and the use of relief staff. However, feedback from staff and interested stakeholders have commented that children do not have many opportunities to access social and leisure opportunities out of the home. This is due to staff resources.

The service has systems in place to monitor the performance of the home and children's personal files are kept securely in the home's office.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
28	ensure that all staff employed at the home receive regular formal supervision and an annual appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of menus identifies all meals that are served in order to demonstrate a suitable and varied diet (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that the monitoring of children's health is appropriately recorded, in particular the regular recording of children's weight and immunisation records (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that support is provided for any child who uses alternative methods of communication to enable them to communicate their needs and wishes effectively (NMS 7.4)
- ensure that the home's staffing is sufficient in practice to meet the needs of the children accommodated, in particular for opportunities to access leisure and social activities out of the home environment (NMS 30.2)
- ensure that a written record of all training for all staff is maintained in the home. (NMS 31.4)