

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC030439
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Somerset County Council
Registered person address	County Hall Taunton Somerset TA1 4DY

Responsible individual	Robert Eveleigh
Registered manager	Stephen John Mullins
Date of last inspection	10/03/2014

Inspection date	16/09/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home provides a sound quality of care and short breaks to children and young people who present with complex and often challenging behaviours. Staff are dedicated to addressing their needs and provide an understanding and nurturing environment. Attention to difference and inclusion promotes positive outcomes for children and young people. Young people make progress and develop emotional, social and independent life skills. Parents are positive about the care provided and one commented about his daughter: 'There is now structure and order to her life and the level of supervision suits her needs.'

Care planning is detailed and takes into account the decisions made at multi-agency reviews. This allows for consultation and agreement with both parents and professionals, ensuring all are working to agreed aims and objectives.

The strengths of the home and most weaknesses are understood. A development plan is in place and the staff are enthusiastic in describing the improvements they are involved in to benefit children and young people.

The Registered Manager is not in full-time, day-to-day control of the home. This contravenes regulatory requirements and complicates accountability. An acting manager is in place and is skilled in understanding and responding to the needs of

young people. However, this is a significant role with responsibility for a large number of staff, children and young people and is being undertaken without appropriate support, supervision or guidance from senior managers. Independent monitoring and monitoring of records by the managers has not been fully effective in identifying shortfalls so that these can be addressed.

The shortfalls identified are not currently impacting on the welfare or safety of children and young people, and action was taken to successfully address some of the anomalies found in respect of a risk assessments.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is registered to provide both permanent residence and short-stay breaks for up to eight children and young people who have complex learning disabilities and associated communication and behavioural needs.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
21/11/2013	Full	good
11/02/2013	Interim	good progress
08/08/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
7 (2001)	appoint an individual to manage the children's home if the registered person is not, or does not intend to be in full-time day to day charge of the children's home. In addition ensure the person in this role is the Registered Manager (Regulation 7(1)(b)(iii))	29/10/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include detail of the matter listed in(3)(a)-(i) and (4)(a)&(b) of this regulation	29/09/2014

	(Regulation 17B(3)(a)-(i), (4)(a)&(b))	
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by the registered person receive appropriate supervision and appraisal. This particularly applies to the Registered Manager and acting manager (Regulation 27(4)(a))	29/10/2014
34 (2001)	ensure that monitoring of the home by the registered person includes the matters as listed in Schedule 6. In particular behaviour management and records of restraint. (Regulation 34(1)(a))	29/10/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment. In particular, ensure that the corridors, toilets and bathrooms have a homely look and feel about them (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. In particular, ensure that copies of the Registered Manager's supervisions are provided to him and a copy is available in the home. (NMS 19.5)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. This particularly applies to making sure staff understand the nature of records to be kept and evidencing compliance with or review of risk assessments (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that the independent person completing quality assurance visits under Regulation 33 is satisfied that the home has an effective approach to behaviour management, and routinely examines records of restraint, and ensures recommended actions match the concerns raised in the report (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5: Children's Homes 3.12)
- Ensure fire risk assessments are accurate and regularly reviewed. (NMS 10.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people are encouraged to develop a positive self-view in this environment. Difference is understood and valued and young people benefit from the specialist knowledge and care provided by an experienced staff team. Work in partnership with parents informs staff of children and young people's likes, dislikes and routines. This then contributes to their care being a positive experience. Staff attention to individual support and communication needs also allows children and young people to make sustained progress.

Most children and young people attend full-time school or college placements to support their learning and work in partnership with other specialist agencies to maximise their own achievements. The home is well equipped to provide an environment which meets the needs of the children and young people using the home.

Children and young people contribute to daily life at the home, and the care provided is led by their needs and the choices they make. Those who live in the home significantly influence the personalisation of their bedrooms, and it is evident that one young person has a passion for trains. The home also keeps a photographic record of children and young people's time in the home. This practice contributes to children and young people feeling valued and has the potential to raise self-esteem and confidence. Young people appear happy in the home, comfortable with their surroundings and with the staff who care for them.

All children and young people have development targets and benefit from specific attention to these by the staff on duty. Some progress for children is evident, including developments in the use of communication skills and improvements in making choices. Most make very important steps in attaining social skills such as being able to sleep in a bed or leave a room, alongside developing the ability to socialise with others. Where possible, children and young people are involved in developing life skills such as attention to personal hygiene and practical skills such as laundry and food preparation. Those who are able and approaching independence are spending unsupervised time in the local community, allowing them to take age-appropriate risks.

Access to community activity enriches children and young people's experiences and opportunities. For example they access community facilities for swimming, and enjoy horse-riding and country walks. One young person takes part in skilled athletics events, throwing a shot put and the discus.

Progress and targets for children and young people are reviewed and the home can

demonstrate the difference it makes to their lives.

Quality of care

good

Staff are able to care for children and young people with different complex needs. Often their behaviour is challenging and embedded. Short breaks and long-term care planning carefully consider individual needs, including avoiding placing incompatible children and young people together. This reduces behaviour management issues and allows young people to progress. The design of the building and is suited to this purpose.

Prior to admission, staff gather information from a variety of sources to inform planning. This includes visiting young people in their homes, talking to parents and seeking information from other professionals. Consequently, likes and dislikes are known to staff and successful behaviour management techniques are shared. Transition planning is comprehensive and moves at the pace required by children and young people. The attention to providing familiarity and understanding promotes feelings of safety and security, reducing some anxiety for children and young people when they move into the home.

Multi-agency care planning and consultation with parents contributes to children and young people receiving the education, health care and support they need. A social worker commented about one of her young people: '[Young person] was in chaos when they arrived in the home; now they are much less anxious and are able to go out into the community with the staff, walking along the beach; this wouldn't have been possible before.'

Some children and young people are non-verbal and communicate through their actions. It is clear most are familiar with and pleased to see staff arriving in the home, greeting them enthusiastically. They are able to let the staff know if they want or need something and staff are skilled at recognising and interpreting non-verbal communication. In addition, if children or young people are anxious or, for example, a stranger appears, they move towards staff, demonstrating that they feel safe with staff and expect staff to protect them.

The home is able to offer two self-contained flats. These are used for young people who are approaching independence or for those who may struggle sharing a space full-time with others. All children and young people have their own bedroom and for young people who live in the home or spend a significant amount of time there, the rooms are highly personalised. For some this familiarity is an essential requirement of their stay, supporting emotional wellbeing and avoiding very difficult behaviour.

The home is spacious and provides a variety of both inside and outside areas, including a cinema room, computer room and large lounges. Each area has a small functional kitchen and then a large kitchen where most food is prepared by a chef. Attention is paid to providing wholesome freshly prepared meals that are chosen by the children and young people, taking account of their health needs, likes and dislikes.

Some areas of the home have just been repainted and have yet to be refurbished to provide a homely and welcoming environment. This particularly applies to corridors, toilets and bathrooms in the home.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Staffing numbers are high and can be adjusted to meet the needs of children and young people. This limits opportunities for bullying and other negative influences that children and young people can have on one another. They appear confident and at home in this environment.

Safeguarding training is provided to staff and they are able to recognise the particular vulnerabilities related to children with complex needs and difficult behaviour. Staff know who to contact and how to respond to any safeguarding concerns involving children and young people and thus protect them from harm. The majority also have adults around them who are independent of the home (mostly parents) who would advocate on their behalf.

Most children and young people have limited or no understanding of risk or danger. Therefore, the main door to the building is kept locked and staff remain vigilant when out with children and young people so that they do not go missing. A missing from home policy is in place and is compliant with local police and safeguarding protocols. These contribute to prompt action should any incident occur.

Physical interventions are used in the home to prevent harm to children and young people. The majority of these are minimal restraint guide holds used to distract or remove young people from the situation. While there is no evidence that the staff have acted in anything but children and young people's best interests, these interventions are not always well recorded or in the format required following physical interventions.

Health and safety checks are completed on a regular basis. All visitors to the home are checked for identification and a visitors book is in place. Protection against fire includes early warning systems, some external door locks linked to the alarm and a sprinkler system. A recent fire risk assessment document contains some anomalies around fire doors, exits and assembly points, which could cause some confusion in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The Registered Manager is not in full time day-to-day control of the home. This task is undertaken by an acting manager who has been in post for nearly three months without registering with Ofsted as required.

The supervision provided to managers is not meeting the organisation's expectations or offering appropriate guidance and support to these staff. Consequently, key staff, one of whom is new to this management role, do not have access to regular, high quality formal support and guidance. A previous recommendation concerning supervision notes being provided to the Registered Manager has not been addressed.

There is some confusion around a number of records. One risk assessment record was out of date causing some misunderstanding around night-time monitoring for one young person. Staff are not clear about the information needed in records following the use of physical interventions and restraint. In addition, monitoring of these records is not contributing to helping staff develop more effective behaviour management techniques. A summary of recruitment and vetting checks for staff did not match the information kept in central records.

Monitoring of the home by an independent person is not meeting the requirements of this role. The visitor is not checking records of restraint and behaviour management as expected. The reports provided are descriptive rather than analytical in making judgements about the quality of care provided. Several concerns raised in the report are not actioned or highlighted in a summary. Consequently, opportunities for further scrutiny and making sure this process addresses and has an impact on improving the service provided are lost.

Staff work in close partnership with other agencies to promote the health, welfare and safety of children and young people. An independent reviewing officer described the staff team as a 'stable, hardworking and skilful team.'

Children's guides to the home are available in different formats and complement the information available in the statement of purpose, which is clear about the aims and objectives of the home. Child-friendly review documents are also being produced to enable young people to participate in these meetings where possible.

A development plan is in place and contributes to identifying opportunities and making improvements to the home which benefit children and young people. It is evident that shortfalls identified during this inspection were not known about or acted on by leaders and managers. While there was a lot of disappointment expressed about these findings, leaders and managers were keen to learn from the inspection experience, welcoming feedback and taking immediate action to remedy shortcomings.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.