

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maire Atherton
Type of Inspection	Random

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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 is a respite centre for young people with disabilities and their families. It provides short breaks for young people who have a learning and/or physical disability and are living at home with their family; many of the young people also present challenging behaviour. It is jointly funded by a Primary Care Trust (PCT) and a local authority, and is managed by the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. The unit is registered for six children and young people, two of whom may be under eight years. Other services offered include day care, after school care and support groups.

The centre is a detached two-storey building, about one-and-a-half miles from the town centre. It is not easily accessible via public transport but has the use of transport for the young people, to enable good links with neighbouring towns and local facilities. The building has its own large secure garden area with lawn, patio area and outdoor adventure play equipment. The interior of the building has been developed to provide accommodation that is accessible to all. The premises have been equipped with additional overhead hoists and other specialist equipment to meet the increased range of complex physical needs of children and young people using the service.

Summary

This unannounced inspection followed up the requirements and recommendations of the last report. All the key standards in staying safe were inspected as were two in being healthy and one in organisation.

Children and young people are provided with sound care from a small, committed and enthusiastic staff team. The frequent use of casual and agency staff to cover high levels of staff absence is having a significant impact on the permanent staff and the time available to them. The deficits identified primarily relate to record keeping, such as keeping care plans and risk assessments up to date, which has the potential to impact on the safety of young people, particularly when being cared for staff who do not know them well.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two requirements and three recommendations made following the last inspection. The introduction of and adherence to the newly approved unified medication policy will ensure that all medication will be managed in the same way by both nursing and social care staff when brought into the home. The Primary Care Trust have provided confirmation that the required checks have been undertaken on nursing staff employed in the home.

Young people are provided with food choices that encourage and support a varied diet during their stay. Staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the policy and procedural updates. The work on improved information in care plans for staff on the communication strategies of young people remains in development due to staff shortages as outlined in the organisation section of this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy freshly prepared meals that provide them with a balanced, nutritious and tasty diet. Staff respond promptly to the young people's requests for snacks and drinks whether expressed verbally, signed or through interpretation of behaviour. Not all care plans contain sufficient information to enable staff new to the service to present the young people's meals according to their needs.

Staff are well versed in the medication policy and procedure and implement this fully, for example ensuring that only medication that is properly packaged with a pharmacy label is accepted by them for administration to young people. Young people's health is promoted by staff who ensure they receive the medication they need at the right time. Clear records are kept of medication booked in, administered and booked out.

A unified medication policy, that both nursing and social care staff will use, is to be introduced from January 11 2010. There have been workshops for staff and parents with supporting written information provided for parents to explain what they have to do. There is a clear plan in place to ensure parents are reminded about the changes and to provide staff with additional on call support for the first month after the policy has been introduced.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff effectively promote the children and young people's dignity and privacy following the written guidance available. Agency staff also receive information on this in their induction to the home which is readily available in an agency staff booklet. This guidance is adhered to by staff as they work with the young people, offering support discreetly and in a way that promotes the independence skills of the young people as far as possible. Staff respect the children's personal space well and provide intimate care sensitively. Information written about the children and young people is stored securely.

There have been no formal complaints recorded about the home. Staff familiar with the children and young people are well attuned to the nuances of their behaviour and interpret this communication effectively, thus minimising any discomfort or distress. Staff respond well to protecting children from bullying, with a good awareness of where the potential for bullying opportunities lie. The mix of children staying overnight together is well considered to minimise risk of aggression between older and younger or more vulnerable children.

Children and young people are safeguarded by staff trained in child protection, how to respond to concerns about a child's welfare and how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse. Identified risks to children, such as running away, self harm or aggressive behaviour, are detailed in care plans and risk assessments.

Children and young people receive good support with their behaviour. Physical restraint is used infrequently and only as a last resort to prevent injury. Staff are skilled in encouraging positive behaviour and distracting and diverting from undesirable behaviour in accordance with the detailed behaviour management plans in place. These show that specialist input is sought and used where required. The use of sanctions is also infrequent but when used they are appropriate and follow the guidance in the child's behaviour management plan as agreed by parents.

Children and young people enjoy a safe and secure environment. Risk assessments on the premises and grounds are in place. These are reviewed annually and updated as necessary. A new system for internal security on some doors has just been installed. The servicing of fire safety equipment is up to date but not all the checks on the system are being undertaken at the required frequency. Risk assessments for children and young people are available. Some, but not all, have been reviewed and updated.

There have been no new appointments since the last inspection. A casual member of staff was clear that a criminal records bureau check had been undertaken by the local authority before he started work in the home in 2007 and that a new one was being processed. The local authority human resources department could confirm that a criminal records bureau check is underway but not when the previous check had been undertaken.

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 satisfactory.

The home is suffering from a high level of staff absences caused by a variety of reasons. The service has continued to run using casual and agency staff. At times the number of agency staff exceeds 50% of the staff on duty. It is not always possible to use agency staff familiar with the home and this can have a significant impact on the children and young people staying overnight, particularly those with limited formal communication skills. The commitment of the permanent staff is commendable in their efforts to minimise the impact of a changing staff team and ensure that the care needs of the children and young people are met. The high demands on the permanent staff are impacting on their ability to update care plans and risk assessments as necessary which has the potential to compromise the welfare of children and young people.

The manager has introduced the revised policies and procedures which link directly with the Every Child Matters outcomes so that staff can see clearly how each policy underpins the provision of direct care.

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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10	ensure individual care plans contain sufficiently detailed information about how young people's food should be presented (Children's Homes Regulations 2001 Regulation 12(1)(a))	31 January 2010
26	ensure that checks on the alarm fire system are carried out weekly (Children's Homes Regulations 2001 Regulation 32(c)(v))	31 January 2010
26	ensure that risk assessments on children are reviewed and updated regularly (Children's Homes Regulations 2001 Regulation 23(c))	27 February 2010
27	ensure that there is evidence that all staff working in the home have full and satisfactory information in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 Regulation 26(d))	31 January 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the number of agency staff on shift does not exceed 50% of the number of staff on duty (NMS 30.3)
- use information from school reviews to inform communication strategies (NMS 7.1)