

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC030677
Inspector	Emeline Evans
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	West Berkshire Council
Registered person address	West Berkshire District Council, Council Office Market Street NEWBURY Berkshire RG14 5LD
Responsible individual	Juliet Valerie Penley
Registered manager	Rachel Eleanor Palin
Date of last inspection	04/02/2014

Inspection date	18/11/2014
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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	good
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home has had a vacant Registered Manager's position since August 2014. The organisation recruited an acting manager and Ofsted have not received an application in for the Registered Managers position within the required timescales. The manager currently in post has very recently withdrawn acceptance of this position on a permanent basis. The organisation is urgently trying to recruit to this position. These changes have left the staff team feeling uncertain and this is having an impact on staff morale. However, staff are working well together to ensure this does not have an impact on the young people accessing the service. Young people are supported by a stable and experienced staff team who are committed to improving outcomes for children. The staff team aim to ensure that the young people have fun during their short-break visit.

Young people benefit from individualised care by a staff team who know the young people well. This provides young people with caring staff that understand their needs and complex behaviours. Young people are supported to progress in many areas such as social development and independence. Staff use a variety of ways to try and gain the views of young people, this ensures young people feel valued and their views are taken into account.

Through the relationships formed with staff, young people are relaxed and feel safe

and parents reiterate this. Staff respond professionally and appropriately to unexpected behaviours and are equipped with the skills to recognise when young people are upset or worried.

Shortfalls were identified within this inspection and are reflected in the overall judgement. As a result three requirements and six recommendations have been made. Shortfalls were identified in internal monitoring and record keeping and staff training in relation to administration of emergency medication.

The management team is committed to revising the current development plan for the home to highlight weaknesses found during inspection. They have a clear vision to further improve outcomes for the young people and provide a child centred service.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home provides short breaks for children and young people who have a learning and/or physical disability, who may require nursing care and are living at home with their family.

The home is jointly funded by a Primary Care Trust and a local authority, and managed by the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. The home is registered to accommodate up to 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.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
26/09/2013	Full	good
21/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
03/07/2012	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
29 (2001)	ensure the records specified in Schedule 4 are maintained and kept up to date. With specific reference to a record of the actual rosters worked by persons working at the children's home (Regulation 29(1), Schedule 4 (11))	29/12/2014
27	ensure that all persons employed by the registered	29/12/2014

(2001)	person receive appropriate training. In particular this relates to training in emergency medication and epilepsy (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	
34 (2001)	establish and maintain an effective system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. To include consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(1)(b)(3))	29/12/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment, with specific reference to ensuring bedrooms do not have clinical waste bins and they have adequate facilities (NMS 10.3)
- update the organisation's safeguarding policy and procedure to include information about child sexual exploitation and allegations against another child. Also forward a copy of the updated policy to the local authority designated officer (LADO) for approval (Statutory guidance, vol 5, para 2.67)
- review the children's guide to include how children can contact their independent reviewing officer, Ofsted, and how to secure an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- devise and implement a written development plan, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure regular bank staff are provided with regular formal supervision (NMS 19.4)
- ensure records are clear, signed and dated, this specifically relates to changes in placement plans. (22.4)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people progress well in many aspects of their lives as a result of accessing the service. Individualised support enables them to have improved confidence to spend time away from their families. Staff are skilled at understanding and interpreting the very individual and complex needs of the young people. This enables them to develop and progress in many areas. Staff and parents recognise the achievements young people have made and are able to give numerous examples of how young people have developed as a result of their stays.

Young people have very individualised admission arrangements. They have a tailor-made transition, which includes visiting the service to meet staff and joining in with activities before building up to an overnight stay; this helps to develop their confidence and trust in the staff. The thorough transition means that they are prepared emotionally and practically to embark on their planned short break care package. The service demonstrates a needs-led approach to accommodating young people and it strives to match them to appropriate peer groups, to promote friendships and participate in shared activities. One parent commented, 'they arrange respite breaks for similar age group so my child gets time to spend with friends and do things they enjoy.'

Young people engage in a range of activities in the community and are encouraged to learn and try new experiences when visiting the home. Staff ensure that young people make good use of age appropriate local amenities such as parks, restaurants and local attractions. This provides the young people with opportunities for social interaction to be further enhanced. Young people have access to a variety of activities within the home including a range of sensory items. Comments from young people, 'lots to do, lots of places to play and lots of activities to choose from.'

The home communicates well with educational settings. This ensures young people's educational needs are fully supported. This is further enhanced by staff meeting regularly with local schools and attending educational reviews as appropriate. This proactive approach to educational achievement ensures young people are provided with support and guidance to reach their individual goals.

Young people receive good support to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. They are able to access the services which they need through the close relationships which the staff team has with local health services. Young people's health care needs are clearly detailed in care plans which provide staff with guidance to follow to ensure individual health needs are met. The service closely monitors young people's health during their stays and responds promptly to any emerging health concerns.

Young people receive the care and encouragement they need to develop

independence skills. Staff support young people, appropriate to their age, ability and understanding, to develop practical skills such as personal self-care and daily living skills. Care planning recognises the individual and diverse needs of the young people who access the service. Staff are innovative in developing and creating opportunities in which young people with more complex needs can be involved. This practice enhances their self-esteem and enables them to develop new skills. Young people benefit from these periods away from home; they develop new social skills and are supported to make decisions in order to maximise their independence. One parent stated, 'the home encourages my child to spend time away from family and become more independent.'

Quality of care

good

The young people benefit from good supportive relationships from committed and attentive staff members. Staff are responsive towards young people's needs and understand when young people are upset; this alleviates unnecessary anxiety for the young people. Observations were indicative of the trusting and fulfilling relationships between the young people and staff.

Young people use a range of communication methods including pictures and schedules. Staff adapt and personalise these methods according to the young people's level of understanding. Young people are supported to make choices in aspects of their care including the activities they take part in and the snacks and meals they eat. Staff will advocate and raise concerns on behalf of the young people. This demonstrates that staff listen to and respond to any concerns young people may have and action is taken to address these.

Staff are skilled at understanding the individual ways young people express their needs; this practice ensures young people's emotional well-being is central to all aspects of care planning. Young people are cared for in line with detailed placement plans. Individual needs are identified and well understood by staff. These placement plans take into account the diverse needs of the young people accessing the service including their medical, health and cultural needs and additional support required due to disability. These plans are updated regularly. However, when hand written amendments are made these are not consistently signed and dated. This does not enable staff to be sure they are referring to up to date information. The home have worked with schools to ensure targets in individual education plan are incorporated into the homes care planning. This enables a consistent approach to be achieved.

Parents are young people's main advocates and are included in the consultation processes. Regular emails and telephone calls take place between the home and parents. This strengthens opportunities for staff to act on what parents say about the care, welfare and support for their sons and daughters. One parent commented, 'staff always act on any suggestions I give.' The team's focus on gaining views from young people and parents demonstrates the home's commitment to act upon

comments in order to improve the quality of care for the young people.

Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and appropriate. There is a clear audit trail of medication coming into and leaving the unit. There is appropriate attention provided to any emerging or on-going health or emotional needs.

The home provides a safe and pleasant environment in which young people enjoy their stays. The home has appropriate equipment to assist in delivering personal care needs such as ceiling hoists and adapted baths. Young people enjoy a safe and pleasant environment. There are photos of the young people having fun displayed in the home. The bedrooms have undergone some re-decoration to create a homely feel. However, some bedrooms still lack personal touches and have items in such as clinical waste bins. This leads to an institutional feel.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people demonstrate that they feel safe in the home by their relaxed and trusting behaviour with members of staff. Through feeling safe and confident in these relationships, young people are able to communicate any issues as they arise and make progress in their personal development. Staff maintain a safe environment by being vigilant at all times. Parents comment, 'I feel confident that my child is safe and well looked after during their stay.'

Young people are closely supported by the staff team, who recognise their diverse needs and take steps to address them. Staff are sensitive to young people's need for privacy and dignity. Care planning documentation identifies risks and preventative measures. These are consistently implemented and keep young people safe.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the needs of children with disabilities. Young people feel safe and well cared for. They have very good relationships with staff who understand and recognise changes in behaviours. This knowledge enables staff to identify and act upon instances when a young person is worried or upset. The current safeguarding policy does not make reference to child sexual exploitation or the procedures to be followed in this instance. In addition, it does not detail procedures to take if an allegation is made against another child. This does not enable staff to have clear guidelines on the correct procedures to follow if they had concerns.

The staffing levels, the vigilance of the staff team and their in-depth knowledge of the young people ensures that they are properly supervised therefore, successfully minimising opportunities for bullying, accidents and young people going missing. Written policies are in place should an incident occur and staff are aware of the procedures to follow. Staff have appropriate understanding of behaviour management and are vigilant in responding to young people's gestures and behaviours. They use rewards and positive encouragement and de-escalate situations

as much as they can. This has resulted in a low number of restraints since the last inspection. Behaviour management plans are incorporated into placement plans these are comprehensive and staff use these fluidly across the shifts to keep young people safe.

The home has a sound recruitment process in place, which ensures all the necessary checks are completed before a member of staff starts work. This protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people.

The premises provide an environment where young people feel safe and where they are being safely cared for. Young people are protected by sound health and safety routines and the home is appropriately secure, taking into account the needs of the young people. Routine testing of the equipment and detailed risk assessments are regularly undertaken to ensure a safe environment is maintained.

Leadership and management

adequate

The organisation has recently appointed a manager to the home. This was following the move of the previous manager to another role within the organisation. The acting manager has a social work qualification and a range of previous experience in management and child care. The manager in post has been in the role of manager since August 2014 and has very recently withdrawn acceptance of this position on a permanent basis. Ofsted have not received an application for the position of Registered Manager within the required timescales. The organisation has taken action and is urgently trying to recruit to this position. These changes of management have had an impact on the staff team and they describe the time as, 'uncertain and worrying.' The staff team feel supported by the acting manager and describe him as approachable. The manager understands the strengths of the home and is aware of areas for development. There is a development plan in place, however this was formulated by the previous manager and this has not been reviewed to reflect the current position of the home. Therefore, the strengths and areas for development as explained by the manager are not incorporated into this plan.

There are regular visits to monitor the conduct of the home under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations, and these visits include consultation with and observation of young people. The internal monitoring of the home does not indicate that routine consultation with young people, parents and placing authorities takes place or how this information is used to further improve the quality of care provided. The monitoring is not in line with recent changes to Regulations and there is no evaluation. This does not enable trends and patterns to be considered and information to be shared with the staff team.

Staff are enthusiastic and committed to the young people in their care. They have formed good relationships with young people and speak positively about them. The

young people benefit from good staffing ratios, therefore, ensuring there are sufficient staff to supervise young people and their participation in activities. Bank staff are used within the staff team and they are supported and guided to fulfil their roles. However, bank staff have not been receiving regular supervision, this does not enable practice to be reflected upon. The home has implemented an on-going staff development and training programme. Staff were complimentary about the range of training offered. Recent training has included safeguarding and 'syndrome' training. However, there was no evidence provided to demonstrate staff have received training with regard to health needs including the administration of emergency medication. Staff have not been provided with detailed training to ensure they are confident in supporting young people in emergency situations. All staff are working towards, or have completed, a formal social care qualification at level three. Contracted staff are well supported by regular supervision, team meetings and annual appraisals.

Staff are familiar with the home's Statement of Purpose and its aims and objectives. There is an emphasis on working in partnership with the young people, parents and professionals to achieve a holistic approach to meet the needs of the young people. The young people's guide is informative and comprehensive and explains what they can expect from the home. However, this contains incorrect contact information for Ofsted and no information in relation to how a young person can secure access to an independent advocate.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young people's life. Records are up to date provide a good picture of young people's stays at the home. However, the rosters within the home did not detail actual hours worked by staff. Therefore, it is difficult to establish who was working at certain times. At the last interim inspection in February 2014 there was one recommendation made. This related to providing a comfortable and homely environment, specifically to replace the high wire fencing in the garden. The home gained feedback from parents about this recommendation. Views indicated that they felt budgets could be spent on other items within the home which would benefit the young people and this was not a priority.

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.