

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Liz Daniels
Type of Inspection	Key

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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 service is situated in a residential part of the town. Respite care is provided for up to seven young people with learning disabilities, some of whom also have a physical disability and the service also has a condition that permits the permanent accommodation of up to two young people for a defined period, whilst an alternative placement is being sought.

The unit is located within a resource centre which also houses the social work team for children with learning disabilities. It is self contained, with its own entrance. Externally there is an enclosed garden with flat access in front of the unit and to the rear a grassed area which also includes a shaded patio. There is a large lounge and dining area, with kitchen facilities nearby. All of the bedrooms are spacious and some have electric powered beds. Ceiling tracking for hoisting is available in each bedroom, as well as in the living areas. A large playroom in the resource centre provides extra space for indoor activities and the sensory room there also offers a safe space. The outreach service is also based at the complex and there is some contact between young people attending there and the young people staying in the unit, when activities take place.

Off road parking is available in front of the complex and is possible in the road outside. There is a bus service that passes the complex and the unit has its own adapted transport, enabling the young people to access activities and education in the local community.

The complex is run by the local authority and the young people who receive respite care at the setting live within the county. Copies of the statement of purpose are available from the unit. A young people's guide and a DVD presentation of what the unit is like are also given to new young people entering the service; they detail the unit, the staff and the daily routine.

Summary

This unannounced inspection was the first visit to the unit for the year April 2009 to March 2010. All of the standards considered by Ofsted to be key standards were inspected. The visit provided the opportunity to meet with the Registered Manager, the two resource officers and several of the care staff. All the young people staying overnight were also there for part of the inspection and were able to demonstrate that they were enjoying their time at the unit.

This setting provides a welcoming, pleasant and comfortable place for the young people to stay when receiving respite care. A motivated and experienced staff team put in excellent measures whereby meeting the young people's individual needs is an integral part of how the unit runs. They see their role as enabling each of the young people to 'have a voice' whereby their views are included in decisions made about them, as well as ensuring they are kept safe, are healthy and are happy whilst away from home.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection. Of these two have been undertaken and one has been partly met. As a result the amalgamation of fire records enables the staff to monitor that all staff undertake fire drills within a 12 month period, whereby the

young people are protected in the event of a fire. In addition, the staff are now recording the progress the young people are making in achieving their goals and determine whether the care they give is helping and supporting them. However, although the manager has a sound knowledge of the recruitment checks required for the selection of staff there is not yet evidence at the setting to confirm that rigorous recruitment procedures are undertaken for staff employment at the setting.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The meals for the young people are prepared in a well designed, spacious kitchen. A varied, nutritious menu is planned and meals are happy sociable occasions when the staff and young people eat together in the dining area. Many of the young people accommodated have specific dietary needs and the food eaten is usually recorded for each young person in the daily log; however, the menus do not always demonstrate that a suitable diet is provided for those young people with particular dietary needs or that each meal is served with vegetables or salad. All the staff are trained in food hygiene.

Many of the young people have complex health needs which the staff explore; each has a health plan and this with their care plan outlines in detail the care required to meet their health needs. Illnesses, accidents or injuries are well recorded and body maps are used as a record for any marks or bruises. Excellent liaison between the staff and health professionals enables continuity of care for the young people and the staff accompany the young people to appointments when required. The staff regard health promotion as an integral part of each young person's care and the overhead hoist system ensures all young people can use the excellent bath and wash facilities as well as be involved in activities arranged at the unit.

Medications are safely stored in a locked cupboard in the kitchen and excellent processes are in place for their safe administration. Any medications the staff administer are well recorded on each young person's medication administration record; balances of these medications are monitored and recorded enabling a clear audit trail in the event of any discrepancies. No non-prescription medications are held and the disposal of medications is appropriate and timely through a local chemist. The staff are trained in the administration of first aid and well stocked first aid boxes are in the unit and company vehicle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The staff recognise that the young people must have privacy and ensure information about them is handled confidentially. Comprehensive policies protect the young people when their possessions are searched or personal care is carried out. The intercom listening facility used for medical safety, is underpinned by clear guidelines to ensure its use does not invade personal privacy. Whilst at the unit each young person is accommodated in a single room which they can lock from inside and staff knock before entering. The young people can use the unit's telephone to make private calls to their families and wherever possible a mixed staff group is on duty, enabling sensitivity to gender issues.

The staff recognise that each young person has the right to complain and that their concerns must be taken seriously, investigated and action taken. The unit's procedure outlines that informal concerns are managed by the unit's manager and more serious complaints are formally

investigated through the local authority complaints process. Positive feedback from parents confirms that they believe concerns are acted upon and they are kept informed. A complaints log is maintained although there have been no entries since the last inspection.

The staff recognise and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns, whereby the welfare of the young people is promoted. The unit's policies and procedures are comprehensive, requiring that all staff have an enhanced criminal records bureau disclosure before employment and all the staff are trained in child protection. In addition, the local safeguarding procedures are readily available in the unit for the staff to reference.

The staff are very alert as to what constitutes bullying and effective strategies ensure the incidence is minimal. Careful planning ensures the groups accommodated are arranged with consideration for those young people who are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable; in addition, the spacious environment enables the young people to be together or to be in separate smaller groups as appropriate. Similarly flexible staffing numbers enables there to be very good supervision for the young people. Discussion about any incidence ensures trends are identified and effective preventative measures are introduced.

Clear strategies ensure those young people at risk of unauthorised absence are identified and that the staff are responsive; this has resulted in no incidence of absence outside the complex boundaries. The unit's policy outlines that in the event, records are maintained as events unfold and the police are involved when appropriate; if required the young people can then meet with their social worker when they return, to discuss their reasons for absence.

The staff respond very positively when the young people behave well and are constructive when their behaviour is inappropriate. The good measures the staff use to manage the young people's behaviour are resulting in minimal physical interventions or sanctions being needed. Comprehensive records are maintained, which are well monitored as part of the unit's quality assurance. All the staff are trained in techniques aimed at 'Promoting Respect in Care Environments'.

Robust measures are in place to maintain the safety and security of the young people. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken for the premises and for activities; in addition, positive steps are taken to protect against the risk of fire and other hazards. Equipment is appropriately checked and the necessary contracts are in place. In addition, the monitoring of fire drills now ensures that all personnel are appropriately trained.

Visitors are well vetted and the manager is fully aware of the measures that must be in place for the safe recruitment of staff. However, staff files are held by the local authority's personnel department; the written evidence to support the recruitment process is not yet complete at the setting and therefore could not be viewed at this inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The young people receive good individual support and the time they spend with staff provides opportunities for them to share any personal concerns they may have. Individual and group activities counter the risk of a young person becoming isolated but professional services are accessed when needed. In addition, the weekly visits to the unit by a representative from the

National Youth Advocacy Service enables all the young people to have access to an independent person who can act as their advocate.

Education is promoted as valuable and the staff support the young people in their learning by enabling their attendance at school. Good liaison at the looked after children reviews enable the staff to be aware of those young people's personal education plan.

The staff organise many activities and leisure interests for the young people. Festivals and celebration days are remembered and all the activities take account of the particular needs, capabilities and supervision each young person requires; equally the staff recognise that the young people may wish to be alone and have some 'free time'. Although house meetings are not held the staff believe they gain the views of the young people through recognising that the way they behave and whether they are relaxed indicates their likes and dislikes about the service.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person's needs are assessed through the looked after children framework. This assessment underpins the development of comprehensive care plans, risk assessments and health plans which are shared with the young people and/or their parents, as appropriate; these are then incorporated in their operational profile 'All About Me' with goals for the young people to achieve. The care plans are reviewed and updated following looked after children reviews or discussions with the young person's social worker and parents. Comprehensive daily logs are also maintained and a report is sent regularly to each young person's social worker.

Reviews of care are held as required within the looked after children framework. Some of the young people attend as appropriate and key staff such as the young person's key worker, health professionals, education staff and family members are involved whereby the young people's progress, likes and dislikes are contributed. All the required paperwork is held in the young person's file which they or a representative can access and read if appropriate, with staff support.

As most of the young people live with their families and attend the unit for respite, there are few instances when contact visits are arranged during their stay. However, for those young people who spend longer periods at the unit, contact arrangements are agreed and the staff encourage and support them in maintaining contact with their families as appropriate. In such instances, the progress of each contact is well recorded.

The admission process enables a young person's admission to the unit to be very well planned and structured. Similarly, the staff spend time with the young people explaining and preparing them for their move to adult services, ensuring they have a smooth transition.

The staff recognise the different ways in which the young people express their views and ensure those views are promoted when key decisions are being made about their lives. The staff also consider it very important to explore the views of parents and professionals involved with the service; questionnaires, telephone discussions, informal discussions, communication books and the young people's reviews are some of the forums used to gain their opinions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The young people are well supported in preparation for when they move to adult services. Although learning life skills is not appropriate or possible for many of the young people accommodated the staff work with their family and social worker to help them attain goals which will support their transition into adult services.

This respite unit is purpose built and is part of a complex designated for the disability and outreach team. It has its own entrance which is accessible for young people who are less mobile and is set within its own secure garden area; this provides a safe space for relaxing and recreation, with excellent activity equipment that is suitable for young people with varying needs and disabilities. There is ample communal space within the unit, including two lounges and a spacious dining area whereby the young people can play together, relax or have some quiet time alone. Spacious wash facilities and the overhead hoist system enable all the young people to share all the facilities and take part in all the activities. The posters, pictures and information boards displayed are starting to make the spacious areas more homely for the young people.

The general décor, furniture and furnishings of the unit make it welcoming, pleasant and comfortable with excellent facilities for the young people. Repairs are undertaken promptly and the property is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The unit's statement of purpose is current and reflects how the setting operates, how the young people will be cared for and what services they can expect. The young people's guide in picture and word format is also comprehensive, although written anticipating that parents or staff will go through it with the young person.

A knowledgeable, experienced and well qualified manager leads the staff team; two resource officers who take a lead in the operational day to day running of the unit are her designated deputies who deputise for her in her absence. The staff team are well qualified as all but one are trained in the National Vocational Qualification for the care of children and young people at level 3 or above, or are undertaking the course; the remaining staff member is booked to start the course in September 2009.

There are sufficient staff rostered to care for the young people and meet the unit's statement of purpose. A flexible approach to staffing ensures more staff are rostered on duty when the dependency of the young people increases; any shortfalls are covered by the permanent staff undertaking extra duties or by the use of regular agency staff. Excellent training opportunities enable the staff to be updated in key areas and robust timetabled supervision as well as annual appraisals ensure the staff team is well supported and any training needs identified promptly.

Quality assurance and reflection on practice is fundamental to how the service runs. Robust internal monitoring is undertaken to monitor the care of the young people as well as the unit's performance against its statement of purpose. Appropriate records are reviewed and the frequency of events and any trends are identified; they are then reviewed with the staff whereby their significance is recognised and appropriate action taken. Monthly monitoring visits are also undertaken by an independent person on behalf of the local authority and recommendations made are acted upon.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding; all the young people accommodated have disabilities but all are treated equally. The staff recognise their individual needs and are proactive in ensuring their diverse needs are met. The ethos of the unit is to recognise and support the different views, needs, cultures, language and faiths of any young person accommodated there. A mixed staff team ensures that the individual personal, social, health and emotional needs of each young person are explored and care given to meet them.

All the young people have comprehensive individual files that are a permanent secure record of their history and progress. They are stored appropriately but can be shared with the young people with staff support, if requested.

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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Recommendations

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

- ensure the menus demonstrate the provision of a suitable diet for those with particular dietary needs (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the manager can evidence that rigorous recruitment procedures are in place for staff employment at the setting (NMS 27).