

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 provides respite care for up to seven young people with learning disabilities, some of whom also have a physical disability. The home is self-contained but is located within a resource centre which also houses the social work team for children with learning disabilities. All areas within the home are wheelchair accessible and include a spacious lounge and dining area, a large kitchen, and a separate room with some sensory equipment. All young people are provided with their own bedrooms and specialist equipment is available throughout. A large playroom and a sensory room in the resource centre are also able to be used by young people and there is a large garden which is well equipped with play equipment.

The home has its own adapted transport, enabling the young people to access activities and education in the local community.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The home is extremely well managed and provides an excellent standard of individualised care to young people with a range of disabilities. Provision for staying safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution, and organisation are outstanding with all other areas judged as being good. The staff group operate very effectively as a supportive team, they are enthusiastic about what they do, and are skilled at meeting the needs of the young people they care for. Provision for staff training and personal development is excellent. The home provides a child-centred environment where young people are happy to be and where they are safe and suitably protected from harm. Young people are given as much choice as possible in their daily lives and there is excellent provision for supporting them to acquire life skills which increase their independence. Staff work in close partnership with parents and have very good working relationships with external professionals involved with young people. Established systems support and promote good practice and there is extremely effective monitoring of young people's welfare and the overall operation of the home. The home's accommodation is of a very good standard and is well suited to meet the needs of young people accessing the service. Lots of opportunities are provided for young people to do things they enjoy doing, both within the home and in the wider community.

The inspection took place on an unannounced basis and the home was inspected against all of the key national minimum standards for children's homes. There is one recommendation arising from this inspection. This relates to reports of young people's reviews, which were not found on the majority of individual case records sampled.

Improvements since the last inspection

All behaviour management records are now being signed to confirm they are being reviewed as part of Regulation 33 visits. This was a recommendation from the home's previous inspection report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Provision for addressing the health needs of young people is excellent. Healthy and nutritious meals of a very high standard are prepared on the premises by the home's cook, using predominantly fresh produce. Menus are displayed for young people in a pictorial form. Special dietary needs are extremely well catered for, fresh fruit and healthy snacks are available at all times, and young people are able to become fully involved in meal preparation. This includes shopping for ingredients. Healthy activities for young people are encouraged and include the growing of fruit and vegetables during the summer period.

All young people accessing respite at the home remain registered with their own doctor and dentist, with parents and carers retaining primary responsibility for meeting their health needs. Established systems ensure all health related information is obtained prior to young people accessing the service and comprehensive health plans address a wide range of individual and complex health needs. Staff work in very close partnership with parents and health professionals whenever necessary and help to ensure an excellent continuity of care for young people. Individual protocols for addressing specific health needs such as epilepsy are in place and staff are suitably trained to administer emergency medication whenever necessary. There is close monitoring of young people's health needs throughout the day and night where necessary.

There are excellent arrangements for the management and administration of medication within the home. Staff have completed training in medication administration and their practice provides suitable safeguards for the welfare of young people. There is no non-prescribed medication kept within the home. All young people's medication is stored securely and kept separate with meticulous records providing a clear audit trail of all medication arriving at the home. Staff are all first aid trained, accidents are at a low level and are being well recorded and monitored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy their time spent at the home and are treated as individuals with their privacy and dignity being respected. The physical environment is safe and

secure, staff are acutely aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and have all completed relevant training. Young people are suitably protected from harm and receive a high standard of individualised care. Staff know individual young people and their needs intimately and successfully develop extremely positive relationships with them. Programmes of respite are arranged so groups of young people are as compatible as possible, staff are extremely vigilant and there are no significant concerns about any young person presenting a risk to others.

Staff adopt a positive approach to working with the young people they care for and are skilled in doing so. Opportunities are regularly provided for young people to engage in constructive activities and to do the things they enjoy doing. Sanctions are rarely used and incidents requiring the use of physical intervention are at an extremely low level with only four since the previous inspection. Records of these are being well maintained. Complaints procedures are provided for parents and placing authorities and symbols displayed within the home encourage young people to talk to staff if they are unhappy for any reason. An independent advocacy service also visits the home weekly and reports to the local authority. There have been no complaints received by the home since November 2007, a tribute to how the home operates and how staff address any concerns at an early stage. Parents are very confident their children are safe and being well cared for.

Arrangements for fire safety at the home are very good. All staff receive fire safety training, there is an up-to-date fire risk assessment, and all checks and tests are being carried out and recorded as required. Fire evacuation practices are being held regularly. Comprehensive written risk assessments provide for the effective managing and minimising of risks to young people, both within the home and while out in the community.

Staff recruitment procedures are in accord with the standards, and provide adequate safeguards for young people's welfare. There have been no new staff employed at the home since the previous inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Provision for individual support is extremely good. Staff are acutely aware of the abilities of individual young people and provide support according to their needs. Some young people are staffed on a one-to-one basis consistently while others are fairly independent and only require staff support at certain times. Social interaction is encouraged within groups whenever possible within the home. Doing craft work, going on trips out, and preparing meals together are examples of this. Staffing levels are being maintained at the prescribed levels and are sufficient to ensure the needs of individuals can be met.

The staff team are well established and provide an excellent consistency of care which has enabled them to develop very positive relationships with individual young people. They communicate extremely effectively with young people, the majority of

whom have significant communication difficulties, and observations show young people clearly enjoy their time at the home. This was confirmed by responses from parents. All young people have designated key workers who assume certain responsibilities, but they are able to be cared for by any staff member.

Comprehensive individual care plans identify the support needed by young people in all areas of their daily lives and ensure the provision of individualised care. Weekly visits to the home by a representative from the National Youth Advocacy Service provides young people with access to an independent person should it be necessary.

There is good provision for ensuring young people's education is not disrupted while staying at the home. Transport arrangements to and from school are supported by staff for some young people. Staff do not routinely attend educational reviews, but good working relationships with the schools attended by young people help to ensure a consistency of approach. Staff described how some young people's classmates have visited the home with their teacher in order to have a better understanding of where their friend stays. Young people do not routinely bring homework to the unit but are fully supported should they do so.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Established systems ensure young people are subject to a thorough assessment prior to being offered a place at the home. Young people observed during the inspection were seen to be appropriately placed and their needs were being extremely well met. Information gathered from parents, placing authorities, involved professionals, and the young people themselves is used to devise comprehensive care plans. These identify the needs of young people in all areas of their daily lives and how these are to be addressed. Individual plans are drawn up in consultation with parents, and are monitored and reviewed regularly by key workers. Statutory reviews are up to date for all young people with young people, parents, staff, and placing authorities contributing to the process. However review reports were not found on the majority of individual case records sampled.

Staff enjoy excellent relationships with the parents of young people and work in very close partnership with them. Parents describe having extremely good communication with the home and being totally confident that their children were being very well looked after. They are welcome to visit at any time, they receive regular newsletters and are consulted and kept informed of matters concerning their children's welfare. Young people have access to a telephone and are able to make and receive calls during their stays.

Young people benefit from excellent arrangements for introducing them to the home in a manner sensitive to their needs. They are provided with excellent information, including a professionally produced DVD, and are able to visit as many times as necessary before staff assess they are ready for their first overnight stay. There is equally good provision for those young people moving on to other placements with staff doing all they can to ensure a smooth transition for the person concerned. A

professionally produced transition DVD involving young people also assists in the process. Consultation with young people is integral to how the home operates, and this was observed during the inspection. Staff are acutely aware of how each young person communicates, and provide them with as much choice as possible in areas of their daily lives. The home has conducted annual consultation exercises involving both young people and their parents and carers over the previous two years. These have provided very positive feedback on the care provided and have also been used to further develop the service.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff at the home are good at encouraging young people to be as independent as possible and are pro-active in supporting them to acquire a range of skills which increase their levels of independence. All young people have individual goals identified which they work towards achieving and which are closely monitored and supported by staff. Increasing their ability to be able to dress themselves is one example of an area that young people make progress in. Observations during meal times saw young people being encouraged to do things for themselves and staff reported that some young people prepare their own breakfast. Photographs were also seen of young people shopping and being actively involved in preparing food for meal times. The home makes excellent provision for ensuring transitions to further placements are as smooth as possible. Staff routinely communicate and work in partnership with parents, placing authorities and identified placements. Staff from identified placements have visited the home to gain information and the home's staff have transported young people to their new homes.

Accommodation at the home is of a very good standard, is well maintained and provides a very child-centred environment. The décor is bright and colourful and there are themed displays and photographs on walls. All young people have single rooms when staying and there is specialist equipment available to assist staff in meeting the specific needs of some young people. Personal items for all young people are kept at the home and made available during their stays. There are communal and private areas and a wide range of recreational activities available to young people. This includes access to a computer, toys, books, TV and DVD's, and art and craft materials. A large games room and sensory room within the larger premises are also able to be accessed. The home has a large garden area with a range of play equipment, some of which is designed specifically to accommodate wheelchairs. There is also an area where young people become involved in growing fruit and vegetables during the summer period. Staff regularly take young people out in the home's adapted transport, enabling them to access a wide range of community facilities. A large collection of photographs show young people enjoying themselves during trips out. A telephone is available for young people to make and receive calls.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home has an up-to-date and comprehensive Statement of Purpose which provides excellent information for parents and placing authorities. Young people are provided with information in accessible formats including a professionally produced DVD, and are also able to undergo a gradual introduction to the home which is sensitive to their needs. This can include tea visits enabling them to meet staff and to become familiarised with the facilities prior to their first overnight stay.

The home is extremely well managed and was seen to operate very effectively during the inspection. Parents are remarkably positive about the care their children receive and the communication they have with staff. There is an established and experienced staff group with a diverse age range and good gender balance. They are very well qualified and clearly enjoy working at the home. The group of staff operate extremely effectively as a supportive team and are skilled at meeting the needs of the young people they care for. Senior staff deputise in the manager's absence and there is 24 hour on-call support available. Levels of staffing were seen to be sufficient at all times to meet the needs of young people and to include one-to-one staffing whenever necessary. Opportunities for training are excellent and ensure staff are able to meet the wide range of needs presented by young people accessing the service.

Staff are receiving extremely good support. They have supervision at the required intervals, they are subject to annual appraisal and have personal development plans in place. There is excellent informal communication between staff, an effective handover system between shifts, and staff meetings are being held regularly. Regulation 33 visits are very thorough and report extremely positively on the homes operation. There is excellent communication with parents and placing authorities, and the welfare of young people is being very effectively monitored.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Documentation, and staff practice within the home show a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities and promoting diversity. An extremely wide range of needs are successfully met by staff who provide an inclusive environment and enable all young people to access resources both within the home and the community. Positive multi-cultural images are displayed within the home and all staff have completed equality and diversity training. There was no evidence of any young person being subject to any form of discrimination.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the results of young people's reviews are recorded on their individual files. (NMS3.4)