

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC031479
Inspection date	13 May 2009
Inspector	Peter Daniel
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	23 January 2009
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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

The home provides short-term respite care for up to four children who have learning disabilities.

The home is situated in a quiet cul-de-sac street within walking distance of shopping, leisure, transport, health and social services facilities.

The children's respite unit shares the building with a similar facility for adults, but the services are kept separate by locked doors. The adult service is inspected separately. The service users of both units share the garden at different times and with separate access.

The children's unit has a large and well equipped soft playroom. There are four single bedrooms, two on the ground level and two on the first floor, including bathrooms, and a staff sleep-in room. There is also a kitchen, dining room, activity room, lounge, bathroom, toilets, and laundry and shower rooms on the ground floor.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection. The home is meeting the majority of the National Minimum Standards. The management team offers effective leadership. The staff group are trained and experienced. The majority of staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3. There are positive relationships between staff and children/young people. Staff are supported by management. The home has effective safeguarding procedures in place. Children reported that they feel looked after and that the home is safeguarding their best interests. The report has recommended that formal supervision is offered to all staff at least monthly. It further recommends that the home carries out a night time fire drill. The home is looking to develop a summer play scheme, a weekend day service and a possible outreach service.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations from the last inspection. Since the last inspection, all children now have a key worker. The home is doing more school visits.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home effectively promotes the health needs of children and young people.

The home provides healthy, balanced diets including fresh fruit and vegetables. Children and young people are offered specialist diets according to their preferences. The home keeps a database that lists each child's favourite food. The menu is ethnically and culturally sensitive. Young people appreciate the food prepared at the home.

Children and young people are administered medication as appropriate. All staff have done training in administering medication, first aid, health and safety and moving and handling. A Residential Care Worker is designated to keep an overview of medication. She liaises with parents, the general practitioner and schools. Parents are invited to give their consent to allow

the home to administer medication. Two people administer medication and two people sign out every time medication is given. The home keeps up to date records of receipt and administration of any medicine to any child. Medication is kept in a locked cabinet in main office.

Young people have the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities, appropriate to their needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home promotes the welfare of children. There are effective procedures for child protection, bullying and for notifying critical incidents. The home has a Locked Door Policy so that the building and garden are secure with entry and exit strictly controlled. The front door is fitted with electronic catches which prevent children leaving the building unsupervised.

The inspector was unable to access staff records and Criminal Record Bureau checks since these are held at the Local Authority's head office. However, there have been no new staff appointments since the last inspection. The home maintains appropriate records as specified in Regulation 29, Schedule 4. The home ensures appropriate training in the prevention and recognition of abuse. Staff have done training in safeguarding, fire safety, moving and handling, behaviour management and Makaton. There has been Midas training for drivers and escort training. Staff know how to respond to child protection allegations or critical incidents.

Children are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Each child/young person has a risk assessment, a behaviour plan and a moving and handling risk assessment. Young people undergo risk assessment before each outing. The home has adequate staff numbers who provide consistent care and control. Children and young people enjoy sound relationships with staff, based on honesty and mutual respect. Staff explain to disabled children about their intimate and personal care. Children and young people are encouraged as much as possible to do their own personal care.

The home ensures that positive steps are taken to keep young people safe from fire hazards. The home carries out regular safety checks including testing of alarms, fire extinguishers and fire drills. A recommendation has been included for the home to carry out an emergency evacuation drill at night time.

The building and garden provide physical safety and security and there are no safety hazards. There have been no complaints about the home since the last inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff actively promote the child/young person's education. The children at the home are placed in respite and therefore staff are not involved in the day to day promotion of the child's education. Nevertheless, the home provides the continuity of education for the child. In situations where a school bus is not provided, children are taken to school by minibus. Children are encouraged to complete homework. Each child has a communication book between the home and the school. Key workers attend the child's school review or send a written report. The child's file contains a statement of special education needs. Staff at the home liaise with

the child's parent before and after every stay. Staff at the home organise planned activities that include soft play, bowling, bouncy castle, visits to parks, museums and cinema.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home provides creative opportunities for children and young people to represent their views and make decisions about the way the home is run. There is a residents' meeting on the first night the child/young person arrives. The meeting covers the menu, activities and trips. Each child/young person is individually supported by a key worker. The key worker updates the care plan and the risk assessment and liaises with the parent or carer before every stay. The key worker completes a report of the stay. A copy is kept on file and one is sent home to the carer with the child. The parents and child are invited to an introductory visit before a child is placed. Contact with family and friends is encouraged. As this is a respite home parents are seeking a break but they do phone at least once a week. All children are encouraged to communicate. Staff have developed communication skills such as Picture Exchange or Makaton. Young people also attend their own review meetings.

Children, and parents on their behalf, are helped to complain if this is appropriate. Complaints are addressed seriously and signed off without delay. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home supports young people in preparation for independent living and adulthood. Young people learn self care skills regarding their personal care. Staff show older children aspects of cooking or children sometimes accompany staff to buy food. Children enjoy homely accommodation. Each child has his/her own room. The building is reasonably maintained but the home has been identified for funding as part of the Aiming High Project. It is planned to develop an additional downstairs bedroom, up date the bathroom and kitchen and decorate the unit. It is hoped this will start in the Autumn.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a statement of purpose, last updated in 2007 and still relevant to the client group and service. The home is managed by the Residential Care Manager who is responsible for the running of the unit. There are three deputy managers and ten full time equivalent posts. The home also deploys one agency worker and two night care officers. There is a part time administration officer, a full time cook and a 30 hour domestic. Approximately 50% of care staff are from ethnic minorities. The staff group is stable. The majority have been in post at least five years. The home is fully staffed and has appropriate ratios of staff to children. There is always a minimum of two staff on each shift. The home has a policy of keeping beds 'void' to allow more one to one support to be given to any child who has a high intensity of need.

The staff group is experienced. The majority have at least NVQ 3 qualifications. Three out of four managers are social work qualified. Staff have undergone various training including health and safety, fire safety Midas training for drivers, escort training, first aid, moving and handling,

behaviour management, Makaton and safeguarding training. Staff have access to the Local Authority's safeguarding training.

Staff are supported by management and there is good morale. They receive formal supervision every four to six weeks though there has been some slippage. As a reminder, a recommendation has been included in this report to ensure that all staff working in the home receive at least one and a half hours supervision each month. Staff receive an appraisal every six months. Management meetings are held monthly.

Files are in good order and there is good record keeping. Placement plans, care plans and looked after reviews are up to date. Key workers visit the children once a year and update the care plan. Records are kept in a locked cabinet in the hallway. Parents take responsibility for personal items and clothing. The care of children in the home is monitored and there are systems in place for regular review. Regulation 33 visits are being carried out monthly. The home is developing schemes to maximise its resources. It plans to run a play scheme for three weeks in the summer and is in discussions about offering a weekend day service. There is also discussion about a possible outreach service. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

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 that during a 12 month period the home carries out at least one night time fire drill that includes the evacuation of staff and children from the building - NMS 26.8
- ensure that all staff working in the home receive at least one and a half hours supervision each month - NMS 28.2