

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Peter Daniel
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	13 May 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 inspection focussed on the outcomes of safeguarding and organisation. The staff are child-centred and there are positive relationships between staff and the young people. There are effective systems in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people. The unit has positive leadership. There is a competent and trained staff group. Staff are supported by management. It is recommended that all staff receive formal supervision at least once a month.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The unit ran a successful play scheme over the summer. There is careful selection of children and young people for respite care. The home has carried out a night time fire drill. The home has consolidated its good practice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The respite unit safeguards children and young people and promotes their welfare. The staff understand their responsibilities in relation to protecting children and know how to report concerns about the welfare of a child. Significant events are notified to the local authority and to Ofsted.

The head office is responsible for recruitment and holds individual staff files. The inspector was therefore unable to access staff records and Criminal Record Bureau checks. However, there have been no new staff appointments since the previous inspection. The home undertakes a Warner interview/questionnaire when interviewing applicants. The home has a system for vetting visitors to the home.

The unit has appropriate systems for managing and safeguarding children's behaviour. These include the monitoring of additional measures of control, bullying, significant events, critical incidents and complaints. It also undertakes a risk assessment on each child young person who is placed at the unit. Children and young people with a high level of need or challenging behaviour get one to one support.

The unit convenes a resident's meeting every Monday and Friday where residents have the opportunity to make their views known. Topics include sharing ideas about food and menus and activities they would like to participate in. Staff communicate verbally or by using communication techniques - see later. Parents know how to access the complaints procedure on behalf of their children.

The unit has ensured that training in safeguarding is provided for its staff. Training has included safeguarding, risk assessments, first aid, moving and handling, health and safety, food hygiene and fire safety training.

The respite unit employs a stable staff group who provide consistent care and control. The staff assist children/young people in meeting their overall needs. Staff and children/young people enjoy positive relationships. The staff provide sensitivity and empathy. The young people in placement were not able to convey their feelings verbally but through observation demonstrated that they were happy and content at being in the unit. They showed a trust in the staff and responded to the positive care. Staff use communication techniques such as Makaton, Picture Exchange or by using prompts. The use of restraint is avoided and young people's behaviour is controlled in other ways such as a child/young person being sent to their room or given a verbal reprimand.

Since the last inspection, there have been seven notifications. These have been dealt with appropriately and referred to Children's Services and Ofsted. There has been one formal complaint that is currently being investigated.

The home ensures that steps are taken to keep young people safe from hazards within the building.

Fire drills, including a night drill, are done routinely. The fire alarm system is checked weekly. Staff have done fire safety training. A health and safety check of building is done monthly. The unit has a locked door policy for the safety of service users. The building and garden are kept secure with entry and exit strictly controlled. The front door is fitted with electronic catches which prevent children from leaving the building unsupervised. The external doors, including to the garden, are alarmed and locked. The fencing in the garden has been raised to prevent young people climbing over and absconding.

The service user's privacy is respected. Bedrooms, toilets and bathrooms can be locked but overridden if necessary. If a child/young person needs private space he/she can go to their bedroom, dining room or playroom.

The overall judgement regarding safeguarding is outstanding. Although young people were not able to verbally communicate, it is evident that the staff give priority to their wellbeing and keep them safe. Service users with a high level of need get one to one support. There are no breaches of regulations or national minimum standards in relation to this outcome.

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 good.

The home has a statement of purpose and relevant procedures.

During the inspection, two children were staying for respite care. Both had severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. One also had high medical needs. Each was receiving one to one care. The home is fully staffed, except for one vacant residential care officer post. There are always two staff on shift at any one time. Overnight, there is one waking night staff and one sleeping staff. The ratio of one staff to one child is common. The home uses the same agency staff to cover, as necessary.

The staff group is stable. There have been no changes of staff since the last inspection. There is a good balance between numbers of male and female staff. Eight staff are from ethnic minorities.

The staff group is competent. The managers have social work and management qualifications. The majority of the staff have National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or equivalent. Two staff are about to start NVQ at level 3. Staff have undertaken additional training including safeguarding, equality and diversity, risk assessments, the Mental Capacity Act, first aid, health and safety, risk management, food hygiene, moving and handling, Makaton training, Team Teach training and fire safety training.

Formal supervision and appraisal is offered to staff. Whilst the aim is to offer supervision on a monthly basis these targets have not always been reached. It has therefore been included as a recommendation in this report. Appraisals are done twice a year.

The home is monitoring the quality of care it provides. Regulation 33 reports are routinely done.

The filing and record keeping is well maintained. Records on the child's file includes detailed information. These include a service user update form prior to admission, contact details, transport arrangements, medication details, general well-being information, laundry arrangements, appointments, body bruise charts, communications sheets, morning, afternoon and night logs, clothing lists, reports home on the child's stay, critical incidents, hospital notes, reviews, school report, behaviour management plans, behaviour guidelines, risk assessments, seizures, behaviour guidelines and contact sheets.

The home has equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policies. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is reflected in the composition of the staff team, the use of

communication techniques such as Makaton and Picture Exchange, Team Teach training, individual food cards kept on behalf of the children/young people and the provision of ethnically sensitive menus.

Young people receive excellent individualised care and support appropriate to their needs. Day to day support by management to staff is good. However, formal supervision is less frequent. Staff are appropriately trained and in addition receive in-service training. There is good record keeping and effective monitoring. The home is effectively implementing equality and diversity.

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 all staff working in the home receive at least one and a half hours supervision each month. This was recommended following the previous inspection - NMS 28.2.