

Inspection report for children's home

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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 unit is situated in a residential area within easy reach of the town. It provides respite care for up to seven young people with learning disabilities, some of whom also have a physical disability. However, the conditions of registration enable the number accommodated to be increased to eight if a young person is staying for an interim period whilst a permanent placement is sourced. Currently there are 45 young people using the service.

The building where the unit is located also accommodates the social work team for children with learning disabilities and, in addition, is used by the outreach service. The unit is self contained and accessed via its own entrance from a shared porch. Externally there is a large enclosed garden to the rear and the accommodation is spread over three floors. Some of the rooms have electric beds and ceiling tracking for hoisting is available in each bedroom, as well as in the bathroom and living areas.

There is an area for off road parking in front of 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 all the young people who receive respite care at the unit live within the county.

Summary

This unannounced inspection was the first visit to the unit for the year April 2009 to March 2010. All 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 some spoke with the inspector.

This setting provides a nicely decorated 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 the young people to progress as well as ensuring they are kept safe, are healthy and are happy whilst away from home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. As a result comprehensive records that include all the required information about sanctions and physical interventions are now maintained.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The staff are aware of each young person's dietary requirements and ensure that the food served meets their needs and preferences. Meals are happy sociable occasions when the staff and young people eat together in the dining room; the menu is varied and staff are sensitive to how much assistance each young person requires, providing support when needed. A few of the young people are becoming involved with food preparation and learning how to cook

safely. All the staff are trained in food hygiene although occasionally food is not appropriately labelled when opened and stored.

Many of the young people have complex health needs which the staff explore; each young person has a comprehensive health plan and this with their care plan details the care required to meet their health needs. Any illnesses, accidents or injuries are well recorded and body maps are used as a record for any marks or bruises. There is very good liaison between the staff and health professionals and when required, the staff accompany the young people to appointments. The staff regard health promotion as an integral part of each young person's care, teaching them how to maintain their personal hygiene and how to stay healthy. In addition, good measures are in place to reduce the risk of infection spreading as staff promote regular hand washing as well as the use of hand gel amongst themselves and for visitors.

Medication is appropriately stored in a locked cupboard and excellent processes are in place for their safe administration. Any medication the staff administers is well recorded on each young person's Medication Administration Record (MAR chart); balances of medication are monitored and also recorded on the appropriate MAR chart, enabling a clear audit trail in the event of any discrepancies. No non-prescription medication is held and the disposal of medication is appropriate and timely. The staff are trained in the administration of first aid and well-stocked first aid boxes are in the home and company vehicle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff respect the young people's privacy and handle information about them confidentially. They are clear about the circumstances under which such information is accessed and when an individual's room or possessions are searched. 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 intercom listening facility available in each room for medical safety, is underpinned by clear guidelines to ensure its use does not invade personal privacy. Similarly the spacious bedrooms and bathrooms enable personal care to be carried out in private and wherever possible a mixed staff group is on duty, enabling sensitivity to gender issues. The young people can use the unit's cordless telephone in their room, or in a quiet part of the unit, to make private calls to their families.

The staff recognise that all the young people have the right to complain and believe their complaints should be taken seriously and investigated. 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. However, it is unclear whether concerns raised by family members are always acted upon or that they are informed of any action taken as a result. A complaints log is maintained although there have been no entries since the last inspection; most of the staff are trained in 'complaints'.

The staff are very responsive to any 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 (CRB) disclosure before employment and all the staff are trained in child protection. In addition, the local safeguarding procedures are readily available in the home for the staff to reference.

Bullying is regarded as unacceptable and effective measures are taken to reduce the risk of as well as to manage any instances. The staff are alert to those young people who are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable and careful planning ensures the groups accommodated are arranged with this in mind. In addition, the spacious environment with excellent play facilities enables the young people to be together or to be in separate smaller groups as appropriate. Discussion about any incidence ensures trends are identified and effective preventative measures are introduced.

The young people are protected by the unit's procedures to prevent absence without authority. Risk assessments ascertain the likelihood of absence and details of the action to be taken are included in the young peoples' care plans. In the event, good records are maintained as events unfold and the police are involved when appropriate. If required the young people can meet with a representative from the 'National Youth Advocacy Service' (NYAS) 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. Good strategies for behaviour management result in few sanctions being given and minimal physical interventions. 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' (PRICE techniques).

Safety checks within the unit protect the young people. Appropriate risk assessments for the premises, as well as for activities, are undertaken; 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. Fire drills and the monitoring in place ensures that all personnel are appropriately trained.

Visitors are well vetted and there are many good measures in place to support the safe recruitment of staff. However, there is not always a written explanation of gaps in employment prior to appointment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive excellent individual support and professional services are accessed when needed. Individual time is spent with their key worker providing opportunities for them to share any personal concerns they may have. In addition, the mixture of group and individual activities arranged counter the risk of a young person becoming isolated. Regular visits to the unit by a representative from NYAS ensure all the young people can access an independent person to act as their advocate.

Education is promoted as valuable for the young people and the staff encourage them in their learning. The key workers and education liaison officer employed by the local authority work closely with the schools; this promotes continuity in care and ensures there is the necessary support in place to optimise each young person's attendance and progress at school. The unit requests the personal education plan (PEP) for those young people who have an interim placement whilst a permanent home is being sought for them.

Many activities are arranged for the young people either in groups or on an individual basis. All the activities are organised to take account of the particular needs, capabilities and

supervision required by the young people involved. Equally the staff recognise that the young people may wish to be alone and have some 'free time'. Although house meetings are not held regularly the staff encourage the different groups to talk together and share their views when they stay.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person's needs are assessed through the 'looked after children' framework and this underpins their care plan, risk assessments and health plan that together detail how those needs are met. However, the care plans are not always developed in conjunction with the young people and/or their parents. Comprehensive records are maintained and a report sent regularly to the young people's social worker.

Reviews of care are held as required within the 'looked after children' framework. Key staff such as the young person's key worker, health professionals, education staff and family members are involved as appropriate and the staff are exploring different ways to ensure the young people are included as much as possible. 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.

Most of the young people live with their families and attend the unit for respite whereby contact is not usually arranged during their stay. However, for those young people placed short term on an interim basis, contact arrangements are agreed and included in the young person's placement plan; the staff encourage and support them in maintaining contact with their families and significant others as appropriate. In such instances, records are maintained whereby the progress of each contact and the frequency can be monitored.

The admission process enables a young person's admission to the unit to be very well planned and structured. Similarly, good steps are being taken to support the young people in learning some life skills in preparation for when they move into adult services.

The staff are alert to the different ways in which the young people express their views and good routes are being explored to ensure they become more involved in the key decisions about their lives. The staff also gain the views of parents and professionals involved with the service, through questionnaires as well as by organising social events which enable informal discussions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Good progress is being made in ensuring that the young people are well supported in preparation for when they move to adult services. Activities and incentives are arranged which encourage them to learn more about areas such as maintaining their personal hygiene, basic cookery skills and how to eat healthily.

The unit is arranged over three floors; the disability team are based in the same building and the outreach team are also accommodated nearby. The complex is situated in a residential part of the town and within easy reach of the sea. It is set back from the road with a secure garden area to the rear; this provides a safe area for relaxing and recreation, with excellent activity equipment that is suitable for young people with varying needs and disabilities. There is ample communal space which includes soft play areas, lounge space and a spa room; these enable the

young people to 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 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 whereby the interior and exterior of the property are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The unit's statement of purpose 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.

A knowledgeable, experienced and well qualified manager leads the staff team; she is supported by two resource officers who take a lead in the operational day to day running of the unit. All but one of the staff are trained in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) 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 undertake the course in September 2009.

There are sufficient staff rostered to care for the young people and meet the unit's statement of purpose. There is a flexible approach to staffing which ensures there are more staff on duty when the dependency of the young people increases; any shortfalls are covered by the permanent staff undertaking extra duties or by using regular agency staff. There is an excellent programme of training available for the staff, enabling them to be updated in key areas. In addition, robust timetabled supervision and annual appraisals ensure the staff team is well supported and any training needs are identified promptly.

Quality assurance and reflection on practice is fundamental to how the service runs. There are good monitoring processes in place 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 signed; 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 any recommendations made are acted upon.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding; 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 if requested and with staff support.

Although there are many areas of very good practice within the inspected standards, the impact of shortfalls under 'staying safe' have been taken into account when judging 'organisation'.

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
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Regulation 26 and in particular a written explanation of any gaps in employment [Regulation 26, Schedule 2(6)].	3 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- label any food that is opened and stored, to protect the young people (NMS 10)
- ensure any concerns raised by the young people or their families are recorded and explored, and that the complainant is kept informed of progress (NMS 16)
- develop care plans in agreement with the young people and/or their parents to ensure the service provided is cohesive with home care and therefore beneficial as respite (NMS 2).