

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC031698
Inspection date	13/12/2010
Inspector	Liz Driver
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	03/03/2010
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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 setting is registered to provide short break care for up to seven young people with learning disabilities, some of whom may also have a physical disabilities and complex health needs. The conditions of registration also allow the number accommodated to be increased to eight if a young person is staying for an interim period whilst a permanent placement is sourced.

The setting is spread over three floors with bedrooms, communal areas, a kitchen, play rooms and a spa room. It also has a large enclosed garden to the rear. 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.

The setting is run by a local authority and all the young people who receive respite care at the unit live within the county.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a unannounced full inspection looking at all the key national minimum standards for children's homes. No actions or recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

Since the last inspection the setting has gained a national award: Provider of Quality Autism Provision, awarded by The National Autistic Society.

Overall the setting provides a high quality service. The setting is nicely decorated and a comfortable place for the young people to stay when receiving respite care. A motivated and experienced staff team put in excellent measures which meet the young people's individual. They see their role as ensuring that young people are kept safe, healthy and happy whilst away from home. Excellent avenues are in place to enable young people to have a voice. Staff assist young people to take part in a range of activities. The staff are also committed to supporting the young people in their learning and development as individuals, helping them achieve their full potential.

Recently the number of respite nights for some families has decreased due to increased demand. The local authority operations manager for disabled children's services and the Registered Manager are actively working to resolve this situation.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection carried out in March 2010.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Food is of a high standard and well managed. 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. Staff have the required training in food hygiene and many have additional training in order to care for the young people's individual feeding needs.

Many of the young people have complex health needs; each young person has a comprehensive health plan with details of how their health needs will be met. All health needs are identified, assessed and planned for and delivered by competent, committed and sensitive staff. There are excellent records relating to all aspects of individual care 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. Care and practice observed throughout this inspection exceeded normal good practice. The care and support systems are organised, highly skilled and comprehensive. 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 administration is robust and extremely well organised. Safe practices and close monitoring enhances protection for the young people. All drugs are stored safely and recorded individually. Monitoring and auditing is excellent. Consents are in place for young people which cover all medical procedures. A very high number of staff are first aid trained and well-stocked first aid boxes are in the home and the setting's vehicles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The service has are very good policies, procedures and practices regarding privacy, confidentiality and the right to make individual choices. The setting's mission statement explicitly underlines this ethos. Confidential records and other information

are securely held in locked cabinets and drawers within locked offices. Whilst at the unit each young person is accommodated in a single room which they can lock from inside, but rarely do, and staff knock before entering. The intercom listening facility available in each room, available 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. Toilet and bathing facilities are of an excellent standard with a range of specialist equipment that affords good privacy. Young people require close supervision but have their intimate care needs met sensitively and with dignity.

Young people's complaints are taken very seriously and the setting's complaints policy outlines the clear investigation procedures the deputy manager or Registered Manager would take. There have not been any serious complaints since August 2009. The unit's procedure outlines that informal concerns are managed in-house and more serious complaints are formally investigated through the local authority complaints process by a designated complaints officer. Young people have access to an advocate who visits weekly and who can raise any concerns or complaints they may have. There is a comments and suggestions book for parents/carers and other visitors to use located in the porch of the setting.

The setting has a comprehensive child protection policy and procedure which staff are very familiar with. Staff receive child protection training at induction and yearly updates from a senior social work practitioner. Staff supervise young people closely and often provide one-to-one support in order to meet their needs and keep them safe. Records are very well maintained and monitored robustly by the deputy manager and Registered Manager. The home's arrangements in this area actively promote young people's safety, protection and well-being to a high standard. The staff work in partnership with health and education professionals plus the police and social workers to promote safety and well being.

The setting promotes bullying as being unacceptable and effective measures are taken to reduce the risk, and manage any instances, of it. The staff are alert to those young people who are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable and careful planning ensures that suitable groups of children are accommodated together. In addition, the spacious environment with excellent play facilities enables the young people to be together or to be in separate smaller groups. Appropriate staffing levels also ensure children receive high levels of supervision at all times.

Robust and clear policies and procedures are in place to protect a young person if they become absent without authority. The likelihood of young people going absent without authority is extremely low due to the good staff ratios and robust supervision of the young people. The main entrance, released by electronic swipe, provides a safe environment. There are side gates to the back garden which is enclosed and safe for young people. There has been no incidence of unauthorised absence since the last inspection. Each young person has a missing child photo and identification information on their individual files.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. Good behaviour is acknowledged through lots of awards; reward charts, certificates, star charts and goody bags. Excellent strategies for behaviour management result in few sanctions being given and minimal physical interventions. Sanctions generally are time out periods for the young people. Most physical interventions comprise a staff member refocusing a young person or moving them away from the situation. Comprehensive records are maintained, which are well monitored as part of the unit's quality assurance. All the staff are aware of, trained in and follow in practice the registered person's policy relating to behaviour management and the use of physical interventions.

Health and safety is an area that the setting takes extremely seriously with robust procedures in place to protect the staff and young people. Extremely well organised systems ensure that regular checks of the premises and safety equipment, such as fire alarms, are carried out. External professionals also underpin these checks with their own checks and tests. Comprehensive risk assessments for the premises, as well as for activities, are undertaken and updated regularly. Equipment is appropriately checked, including specialist equipment for individual care needs. Fire drills and the monitoring in place ensures that all staff are appropriately trained. The setting has an in-house fire officer, who has received training from the local fire and rescue service who visit yearly. The setting has current Public and Employee Liability insurance cover in place.

Visitors to the site are closely vetted and robust recruitment processes are undertaken to protect the young people. Visitors and contractors are well monitored; they are required to show evidence of identification, to sign the visitors' book and are supervised whilst on site. When staff are being recruited, all the necessary information is received prior to employment and discussions with staff confirm that the required checks are made. Young people are actively involved in recruitment where they can complete questions, in picture format, to be asked to the applicants. Questions asked by the young people include 'can they cook chicken' and 'can they play snap'. These are acknowledged as being very relevant by the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people who stay at the setting may have very complex emotional and behavioural needs. All the young people who use the service have a learning disability and in some cases may be on the autistic spectrum. 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 an advocacy service ensure that all the young people can access an independent person to act on their

behalf.

Each young person's individual needs are planned for in a detailed and thorough manner. Care plans are developed using information from the multi-disciplinary network which staff have very good links with. Close liaison between care staff, education staff and medical staff, underpinned with information from parents, ensures that all aspects of each young person's complex needs are met to an excellent standard.

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 for those young people who have an interim placement whilst a permanent home is being sought for them.

The individual support offered to the young people enables them to participate in a variety of interesting activities. The robust risk assessment process and knowledge of the young people ensures that their right to enjoy a community presence is promoted and valued. Activities enjoyed by them include swimming, bowling, shopping, and trips to local festivals and events. Equally the staff recognise that the young people may wish to be alone and have some 'free time'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Since the last inspection the setting has gained a national accreditation as a provider of quality autism provision, an award accredited by The National Autistic Society. This three year process to gain accreditation has resulted in improved practice by staff especially relating to communication methods. The setting now, for example, uses many more pictures to inform young people of who is on duty, what food is for dinner, and which room they will staying in for their respite time.

A structured approach towards care planning, assessment and review ensures young people have their particular needs assessed in a detailed and thorough manner. The assessment comprehensively covers their physical, medical, social and educational needs. Communication methods are a priority and are established prior to admission and developed further whilst at the setting. All young people have placement plans of a high standard. Individual reviews are regular and purposeful, involving all professionals involved in the young person's life. Care plans, with clear targets identified, are reviewed and updated regularly; all recording is of a very high standard. The pro forma for care plans ensure all targets are broken down into six areas; specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound and progress made. The plans clearly describe how staff should care for the young person with a key focus on their communication needs, abilities and complex health needs.

Most of the young people live with their families and attend the unit for a short break; family contact is not usually arranged during their stay. However, for those young people placed on an interim basis contact arrangements are agreed and included in the young person's placement plan. The staff encourage and support young people in maintaining contact with their families and significant others. Contact arrangements are recorded and detailed. Restrictions on contact are also clearly written in placement plans.

The young people are encouraged to influence the care they receive and the staff have developed effective communication systems to ensure their views are heard. This has been enhanced as a result of the work undertaken to gain the national accreditation. The young people are never assumed to be unable to communicate their views and have contributed to a health policy, questions for new staff undertaking the recruitment process and being actively involved in interviews. The staff team know the young people very well and can help them to make choices. 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.

The admission and leaving processes are both extremely well planned and sensitively implemented. There is a large amount of information provided to parents and carers about both processes, as well as a DVD for young people about moving on. Currently there are four resident young people which has resulted in a decrease in the amount of short break care being offered. The operations manager for disabled children and the Registered Manager stated this is being actively addressed with parents to resolve this situation.

Staff relationships with young people are sensitive, caring and professional. Highly commendable practice was observed throughout the inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The setting offers a high level of service in preparing the young people for adulthood. In line with the local authority joint agency transition policy and protocol for disabled people, disabled young people are subject to transition reviews. The findings from these meetings contribute to young people's transition plans. Excellent arrangements are made whereby the young people can stay at the setting for as long as is required until an adult placement is sourced. Care plans contain information about the goals they are working towards. These are usually independence or improved social skills which are aimed at helping young people achieve their full potential.

The young people live in accommodation that is of a high standard throughout. Communal and private areas in the unit afford ample space. All communal areas are

decorated and furnished to a high standard and are extremely well maintained. There are well-equipped soft play rooms, sensory rooms and a spa room that are all well used. 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. Since the last inspection additions have been made to the garden such as a pergola and designated area for younger children. 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. Bedrooms have a range of specialist equipment which is also maintained to a high standard. All equipment is regularly checked and is very suitable to meet individual needs.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence can be seen throughout the provision and is embedded in all policies, procedures and aspects of the care and practices at the setting. The setting recognises the richness of diversity of childhood, including the different strengths derived from ability, age, culture, ethnicity and gender.

The unit's Statement of Purpose, updated in 2010, 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. There is a DVD for young people to view and also the setting has a web site for all to access.

The organisation of staffing is of a high standard. The number of staff on duty is apt and increased in line with changing needs. There is an excellent gender and age mix of the current staff team. Staff are happy working at the setting. Staff training is structured, of a high standard and delivered by specialists. Relationships with specialist health professionals are very good, enabling staff easy access for advice and training. All staff receive an excellent induction programme. In addition, robust timetabled supervision and annual appraisals ensure the staff team is well supported and any training needs are identified promptly.

A knowledgeable, experienced and well-qualified manager leads the staff team; she is supported by a deputy manager who is highly qualified and experienced. All but one of the staff are trained in the National Vocational Qualification for the care of children and young people at level 3 or above.

The Registered Manager and staff have worked hard to gain a national award for being a quality provider in autism provision from the National Autistic Society.

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 and acted on. Monthly monitoring visits are also undertaken by an independent person on behalf of the local authority and any recommendations made are acted upon. These reports are submitted to Ofsted without fail.

All the young people have comprehensive individual files that are a permanent secure record of their history and progress.