

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Warren Clarke
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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

This is an independently operated children's home providing respite care for a total of 42 children and young people with learning and other difficulties, but for four at any one time. The children and young people are aged between six and 19 years. Four children and young people were resident at the time of the inspection and they all participated.

The home is a domestic bungalow and is set back from a main road in a suburban area. It is on a bus route and close to shops and other amenities. All facilities are on the ground floor and consist of four separate single bedrooms, large dining and sitting areas, sensory room and kitchen. The suitably enclosed outdoor area is equipped with appropriately adapted play equipment and a sensory garden. The home is equipped for children and young people who also have physical disabilities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced inspection assessed performance against national minimum standards relevant to the staying safe area of the national outcome framework for children's services. It also assessed progress and effectiveness in addressing any requirements and recommendations which were made at the last inspection.

The home consistently provides children and young people with very high standards of care. This continues to be the case in regard to the robust practices employed to protect children and young people from abuse and from harm. The children and young people enjoy good relationships with staff who know them well. Staff maintain a safe, caring environment in which children and young people relax and benefit from the high level of individual attention, constructive leisure activities and sheer fun which is a feature of their care experience. However, the home has operated for some considerable time without a Registered Manager. Although this does not have any current adverse impact upon the children and young people's care, it is a regulatory requirement and therefore features as the sole area for improvement on this occasion.

Improvements since the last inspection

The management is satisfied that some children and young people do not now spend long periods travelling to and from school because of the transport schedule. This means that for the relevant children and young people they do not have to rise too early in the morning. The home has operated without a Registered Manager for some considerable time. The acting manager says that an application for registration

has now been submitted. It is necessary for the person managing the home to be registered as this provides validation of the person's fitness for the position which comes with statutory accountability.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The thoughtful care of very high standards that the home provides the children and young people properly recognises their high level of dependency and the need to preserve their privacy and dignity. There is strict attention to detail in ensuring that all intimate care is conducted in private and in ways that do not avoidably cause embarrassment or any compromise of the children or young people's dignity. Each child or young person is allocated an exclusive bedroom when resident. These rooms are equipped so that any personal care assistance needed, such as with dressing, is conducted in private. Bathrooms and toilets are similarly well equipped to promote the children's and young people's privacy and as much independence as possible. The high ratio of long serving staff ensures that those who support the children and young people in the most intimate care are persons with whom they are comfortable and familiar. Staff operate within a code of conduct which includes maintaining the confidentiality of personal information. This extends to the secure keeping of children and young people's personal records.

Children, young people, their parents or others are encouraged to feedback to the registered person their experience and views of the service by means of comments, compliments or complaints. This feedback is regarded as valuable information for aiding the home's quality assurance. Accordingly, a clear complaints procedure is in place which meets the requirements for receiving, considering and reporting the outcome of complaints to complainants. The complaints procedure is actively promoted and is presented in appropriate formats relevant to the children and young people's age and understanding. An established culture of openness ensures that there is ongoing inviting of feedback from parents and social workers about the quality of service. Staff are also alert to some children and young people's additional communication needs which may limit their ability to make their dissatisfaction known immediately. There is therefore a high level of vigilance for cues that indicate dissatisfaction from children or young people who are not able to make their views and feelings known conventionally. No complaints are recorded since the last inspection, but when complaints are made they are taken seriously and dealt with fairly.

Staff are appropriately trained and have access to relevant policy, procedure and guidance, which equip them well to understand the nature of abuse. Established safe

caring practices in the home also ensure that staff work in ways that prevent scope for abuse. In place is a clear procedure for the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. There are no current concerns about the children and young people who are completely at ease with staff and comfortable in the home's environment. The home's comprehensive and coherent protection procedure has been validated as in accordance with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Where it has been necessary for staff to invoke the child protection procedure, they have done so confidently and appropriately.

Bullying does not feature as a significant issue in this home. The children's and young people's disabilities and health problems limit their ability or inclination to bully others out of malice. However, the sound anti-bullying guidance recognises that some children's and young people's disability may cause them to behave in ways, which may impact on others adversely. Accordingly, before a child or young person becomes a resident, he or she is assessed, taking account of their vulnerability and compatibility with other children and young people likely to be resident at the same time. Staff use this and other information effectively to ensure that scope for bullying or discomfort is controlled. Staff provide a high level of supervision primarily to respond to needs arising from the children and young people's disabilities and health problems, but which also ensures limited scope for unobserved bullying or similar behaviour. Although the children and young people are not able to comment on this aspect of care directly, observation of their relaxed demeanour and their warm, unguarded response to staff and other residents suggests that that they feel safe and untroubled.

Staff remain committed to, and act on, the principle that the children and young people's short break care should provide them enjoyable experiences. Great emphasis is therefore placed on actively engaging the children and young people in constructive activities, fun and games which leave little time or scope for misbehaviour. The children and young people respond well to this. There are, therefore, minimal behavioural problems other than those which are known and understood to be symptomatic of their disability or health problems. Staff know the children and young people well, how they behave in given situations and the agreed individual response to any unacceptable conduct. Staff work skilfully within the behaviour management policy, which focuses primarily on promoting good conduct and helpful modification of any specific behavioural difficulties that may be presented. The policy establishes strict safeguarding criteria to ensure that children and young people are not unfairly targeted or treated abusively. The effectiveness of this is shown in the limited use of sanctions and the need for staff to use physical intervention.

The children and young people are looked after in a safe environment robustly maintained by a comprehensive range of health and safety measures. These measures take account of the vulnerability of the children and young people as shown in risk assessments. Where assessment of risk identifies potential hazards steps are taken to either remove or control the risk. For example, safety measures are in place for when children and young people are being transported in the home's vehicles. Staff are trained in the safe use of aids and equipment and the children and

young people are appropriately supervised at all times. The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in the absence of any serious accidents or incidents. All required fire precautions are taken including regular drills which take account of the children and young people's special needs. Strict adherence to safe standards of food handling, practice of good general hygiene and regulation of the hot water temperature to a safe degree also protect the children and young people from the harm.

Children and young people accommodated in the home are properly protected from adults who may be unsuitable to look after them. This is achieved by the registered person's thorough approach to staff selection and vetting. All potential staff are vetted by means of references and Criminal Records Bureau check, and are not permitted to commence employment until the registered person is satisfied with the outcome of those checks. Similarly, visitors' access to the home is controlled and they are kept under supervision whilst on the premises. Combined, all these arrangements are successful in keeping the children and young people safe from abuse and harm.

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 not judged.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
34	ensure that the person employed to manage the home is presented for registration by Ofsted. (Regulation 7 (1) (2) and 8 (1)(2))	30/06/2011