

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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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 children's home offers respite care for young people with a severe learning and physical disability and/or complex health needs, from the age of five up to their 18th birthday. Currently the home works with 55 young people and each is allocated a minimum of 24 nights accommodation per year, although the home reports a degree of flexibility with this, and the number of nights can be increased dependent on need. It does not provide an outreach support service.

The home has eight beds and comprises of two separate living units. One unit is equipped to care for those young people who have physical disabilities, while the more able and active young people are cared for in the other unit.

The home is part of the disability fieldwork team, and families using the home may also receive a package of community support services.

Summary

This key unannounced inspection found that an outstanding level of care is provided by a well trained, well managed and dedicated staff group. The resources, activities and facilities available in the home have been designed to provide disabled young people with the highest level of care and life experience. The support given to the families of disabled young people is of a high standard.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations or action requirements arising from the previous inspection. However, since that time the home has increased the number of young people using the service from 50 to 55. The home has been granted planning permission for a conservatory/orangery and work has started on its construction. The office accommodation has been improved to give more working space and the general layout of the sensory garden has been improved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent level of care is provided that is tailored to meet individual children's overall health needs. These needs are initially assessed by placing social workers in collaboration with health professionals and independent reviewing officers. They are included in a comprehensive placement agreement which details the care, services and resources that will be made available by the home to meet a child's particular needs. Following on from the placement agreement, more detailed care plans are constructed by the home in collaboration with young people and their families. Each child is allocated a link worker who is a member of the care staff team and who has a full knowledge of their individual needs and their personal information, as it is contained in the care plan. These plans are reviewed annually. They are clearly written and provide a good reference point for the home in identifying the best way to address a child's health needs.

A child's food preferences and dietary requirements are identified by their link worker, recorded and made known to the catering staff. Rather than providing set group meals, the meals provided are tailored to meet the individual needs of each child placed. When it is necessary to provide liquidised food, the cook takes care to ensure it is presented in an appealing manner. Pictorial signs in the dining room are easily accessed by young people to help them indicate food choices and preferences. There is an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables available and children are encouraged by staff and from pictorial displays to eat healthy foods. These measures provide young people with an excellent level of food choice. Food storage and preparation areas appear clean and well ordered. All staff are trained in food hygiene and infection control.

All care staff receive annual training in the management of an individual child's health needs. These needs are often quite complex. This specialised training is undertaken by a qualified nurse who is responsible for assessing staff proficiency in the various techniques to be applied. Additionally, the instructions/guidelines for staff in the management of children's individual health needs are contained in their case files.

The administration and application of medication to children with complex needs can involve the application of invasive methods. Staff who administer medication are appropriately trained and this training is regularly updated. There are effective systems in place to receive, store and record medication received from parents and from school. Children's general practitioners are asked to inform the home of any changes or variations to prescribed medication. The home reviews its medication policy annually. All of these rigorous measures are conducted to an exacting standard which ensures that children's ongoing health needs are subject to a high level of care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home has a range of policies and procedures in place which are intended to ensure that children stay as safe as possible. These policies include safeguarding children, bullying, complaints, the application of sanctions, physical restraint and guidance for staff on action to be taken in the event of a child going missing. Staff are properly inducted, trained and supervised in the application of these policies and procedures.

The home maintains a complaints record book. No complaints have been received by the home in the past 12 months. The home's complaints policy is contained within its Statement of Purpose and in the information documentation about the home that is given to parents and other stakeholders. There is also a summarised version of the policy in symbol form which is contained within the young person's guide. The home also produces a brochure for young people called 'If you are not happy....' which advises young people how they can make a complaint. These information methods help children to know how they can let it be known if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care. Children may also raise concerns with their link workers at their frequent meetings. The authority has also appointed an independent advocate who visits the home for three hours every week and who children may raise any concerns with. These numerous methods of raising concerns about the service further ensure both children's safety and parental involvement.

Staff have a good knowledge of the safeguarding children procedures thus helping to keep children safe. The home makes available to staff online access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and they receive annual training specific to safeguarding children with a

disability. Staff also receive training on the authority's whistle blowing policy. The home has an exceptionally high number of care staff on duty by day and by night to ensure the safety and well being of the children placed. With the close supervision applied, opportunities for bullying are negated as is the likelihood that children will go missing.

The home has a written policy on the use of sanctions and a record is kept of any sanctions applied. This record is reviewed and monitored by senior staff. Sanctions are also recorded in a child's confidential diary. The home has an appropriate policy on dealing with challenging behaviour and staff receive training in this area. Staff also receive annual training in the application of physical restraint and a record is kept of any incident where physical restraint is applied. This record is monitored by senior staff. Thus behaviour management systems are rigorously monitored to ensure that they are fair and non-abusive.

The home constructs and administers a number of risk assessments designed to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring to children living in the home. These include assessments of various situations and activities undertaken. Staff are required to sign and date the assessment to indicate that they have read it. The authority's health and safety officer conducts an annual visit to the home and produces a report about the safety aspects of the home with recommendations if necessary. These measures help to ensure that the living environment is safe for children and staff.

Fire procedures written in symbol form are in place in each child's bedroom advising them what to do in the event of a fire. The fire safety book records and dates when alarm checks are made, when fire evacuation drills have been carried out, when fire equipment checks have been carried out and when staff have attended fire safety training. These are all in keeping with fire authority recommendations and a fire officer visit has been carried out within the past year. Fire evacuation principles have been agreed with the fire authority and night staff agree a fire evacuation plan on a daily basis. The home has appointed a designated fire safety officer within the staff group who has the responsibility of ensuring that fire safety measures are correctly applied. Staff are fully conversant with fire evacuation procedures. Fire safety methods in the home are rigorous and designed to keep children safe.

All staff are trained in basic first aid and senior staff attend a four day training course on first aid. There are first aid boxes located in key areas around the home. A designated officer is responsible for ensuring that these are kept fully stocked. An online record is kept of accidents occurring which is monitored by the health and safety officer at County Hall. All staff are offered the opportunity to be inoculated against the risk of Hepatitis B. All staff receive training in manual handling.

The home has two mini-buses which are maintained by the council and which care staff have to undertake weekly safety checks on. Staff who drive the mini-buses have to show evidence of the validity of their driving licences and must inform the authority if they have acquired penalty points.

Staff personnel files are centrally held, although the home also retains copies of the relevant vetting documentation. Staff undertake enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks before appointment and these are followed up every three years. Three references are taken on each applicant, one of which must be their most recent employer and these are followed up verbally.

A medical self-disclosure is made by applicants which is followed up by an occupational health officer enquiry when thought necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual care needs are well detailed in their care plans which are appropriately reviewed. These include the identification of their favourite hobbies, interests and leisure preferences. Children attend their schools during the day. Staff link workers assume a key working responsibility for up to three children each and have a particular knowledge of their individual care details. They make an annual visit to the young person's home and make regular contact with their school through telephone contact, by home/school diary and by attendance at the school review. This is good practice and ensures a continuity of care.

The home has an extensive range of activities available to the young people every evening and weekend. These include arts and crafts, cookery, music and personal development on workday nights. It also has an activity group which meets for one weekend each month, with care staff assuming responsibility for the weekend activities of seven young people. There is a activities booklet which provides information on the group and notes participation in community activities such as swimming or the cinema, which are intended to develop a young person's social skills and development. The home has a minibuss and a people carrier that may be used for trips and activities. The home has a caravan on the coast which it uses during the summer. The number and quality of the specialist leisure and play facilities within the home is remarkable.

The home is extremely family and community focused. This is achieved through the inclusion of families during Christmas and Easter festivities within the home and community fetes. The home has a number of internal quality assurance initiatives which are intended to consult the young people and their families about their living experiences within the home and to look at ways that this experience can be improved and developed.

The home has access to the council's children's rights officer and an independent advocate who visits the home on a weekly basis. Full details of how these officers may be contacted is contained within the home's information documents and is also displayed within the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Individually developed care plans are of a high quality and provide full information about each child placed. These are constructed by the home prior to a young person's admission. These provide guidance and information on a young person's assessed needs and personal care requirements. These plans are developed in consultation with parents and professionals involved with the young person and these are subject to review within appropriate frequency. Case files are comprehensive, up to date and clearly written. They contain appropriate risk assessments of various situations where a young person may be at risk and staff have to sign that they have read and understood these assessments. Parents sign their agreement for young people's engagement in various activities and the home's written protocols, including the protocol on the use of physical restraint. Parents are kept fully informed about day to day events affecting their children both verbally and in written form. A diary is maintained between school and home and its contents made known to parents. These considered and additional efforts conducted

by the home help to ensure that parents are able to continue playing a significant role in their children's lives.

Diary sheets record daily events occurring at the home and the behaviours and dispositions of individual children. Staffing shifts 'hand over' specific information about individual children. Education plans detail specific literacy, numeracy, social and behavioural targets. The files are audited annually by the Registered Manager. The home link workers consult young people about their view of the quality of care by the use of a questionnaire and these are taken into account when planning activities, food choices and aspects of day-to-day living within the home. A senior care worker conducts a quality assessment of the standard of care provided based on consultation with the young people and other interested stakeholders. The home ensures that children are welcomed home each day by members of staff when they arrive home from school. Staff treat children with dignity and respect.

The home constructs a life time booklet which details the stay of a young person at the home. This is given to them when they leave the home. It includes photographs of the home and of staff members, and of the young person's participation in various activities. It also contains useful information on personal care, sleeping, eating and drinking.

Preparation for the arrival of a new young person is undertaken by the appointed link worker who assumes responsibility for contacting the family and for arranging visits which allow a gradual but managed introduction to the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The home is comfortably furnished and brightly decorated without institutional style or appearance. Young people's artwork is displayed on the walls of communal areas, providing a homely feel. The home is wheelchair accessible, and although it has a first storey, there is both a lift and stair lift to this level. The home has eight bright and comfortably furnished bedrooms with at least six young people staying each night. The bedrooms are of a suitable size and are light and airy. Although the children staying at the may differ on a daily basis the home have systems in place which are designed to make sure that each of the bedrooms have an element of personal ownership for the young person using a particular room. This attention to personal care is an example of outstanding practice. Two of the sleeping areas are designed to provide 'safe beds' for the security of children who may cause injury to themselves. They are never used to restrain young people.

Parents make financial contributions which stand as young people's pocket money and which they can use to participate in outside activities, for example, trips to leisure centres and swimming pools. The home keeps an appropriate record of cash held and cash transactions. Parents provide their children's personal requisites and toiletries although the home keeps stocks of these should children run out. Parents without the financial means to provide these contributions are supported by the home. Children attend all activities and receive the same amount of pocket money regardless of parental contribution. Parents provide their children with enough clothing for their stay. The home has an internal laundry with appropriate facilities for the hygienic washing of clothing when necessary.

The majority of bedrooms have carpeted floors; where this is not the case this is seen to be determined by particular and individual need. There are an appropriate number of bathrooms, with one bathroom having an overhead hoist for use by physically disabled young people.

The home has a ball pool room and a sensory room which includes a vibrating water bed. There is a large garden with trampoline and play areas with a cushioned surface, a paddock and a well-designed sensory garden which is wheelchair accessible and has raised flower beds and a pergola with a countryside view. The garden is well lit allowing it to be used during the evening. There are gates to some of the downstairs rooms and kitchen areas. These are to prevent accidental injury. Key pads to external doors prevent unsupervised exit or entry to the building.

An activity transitions group meets for one weekend each month. This group is designed to help older young people nearing the end of their care to prepare for independent living. This includes domestic household care such as washing and cleaning, using public transport, and managing their finances. When a young person leaves the home, the link worker is expected to be fully involved in this transition. The work of this group is evaluated annually. The preparation and support of young people nearing the end of their time at the home is of an exceptionally high quality.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of diversity and equality is outstanding. This is evidenced in a number of ways. Children are included in staff recruitment practice and there is extensive provision of specially adapted equipment and resources to support both the daily living and recreational play of children with a disability. Staff are trained to ensure that they have the specialist skills to support the personal care needs of individual children and there is a correct gender balance within the staff group. There are effective corporate policies on equal opportunities, racial awareness and disability awareness. Staff have received recent training in 'Sexuality and Young People with a Disability', and 'Equality and Diversity'. The provision of an 'Equality/Diversity' manual for staff includes a wealth of information about different cultures and ethnicities. This range of measures to promote equality and diversity help children with a disability to develop their self esteem and sense of wellbeing.

The home's Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and clearly written. This was last reviewed in December 2009. The home has an array of information document available for parents and professionals. The information documents for children and the children's guide have been written in user-friendly formats. The provision of clear information documents gives children and parents a knowledge and understanding of the purpose and function of the service.

The staff group are well supported and managed. All staff complete an induction programme which gives them the necessary information to undertake their role. Staff undergo a six month probationary period to ensure that they are able to carry out their identified role. Staff receive training in all the core areas necessary to ensure the care and safety of the young people accommodated. Staff receive one to one supervision monthly and there are monthly team meetings. All care staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in 'Health and Social Care for Children and Young People' and senior staff are trained to NVQ at level 4. The Registered Manager and the assistant manager both have the NVQ at level 4 and both have the Registered Managers Award. All staff undergo an annual performance appraisal

which identifies their training and developmental needs. This high level of qualification and ongoing training ensures that children are cared for by skilled and competent staff.

The home notifies the regulatory body about all items required by the Schedules of the national minimum standards (NMS). The authority's Area Service Manager conducts Regulation 33 visits as required by the NMS and produces a report which details any necessary actions required. These visits are unannounced. The home constructs an annual business plan which reviews the quality of care and makes plans for the development of the service. The management and staff group undertake an annual team development day where areas for service development are identified. The home conducts a questionnaire survey of all stakeholders including young people, parents, placing social workers and key professionals as part of their quality assurance. Ongoing quality review demonstrates a commitment to service development and improvement.

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

There are no recommendations.