

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC032565
Inspection date	12 August 2009
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	14 March 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

This home is operated by a local authority as part of its residential provision for children with disabilities. The home is registered as a children's home for up to six young people at any one time and offers respite care only for children and young people with severe learning and/or physical disabilities. Young people of either gender, between the ages of five and 18 years can use this respite care facility. Periods of respite vary according to individually assessed needs and only apply for 43 weekends a year and for five weeks scattered through the school holidays. Currently there are over 20 children and young people using the service throughout the year.

The unit is on the ground floor of a two-storey, detached building which was purpose-built originally as a children's home. The respite service, is now contained within about two thirds of the ground floor area, with the other third used as a day nursery, the upstairs accommodation is currently used by an area social worker team attached to the Disability Services Team, however notice has been served on both of these facility and soon the whole of the premises will be exclusively used by the respite care home.

The centre is situated within a short bus ride of local amenities and has a large, soft floored outside garden and a play area suitable for those who use a wheelchair. The rear of the centre has views over open land and is not overlooked. There are car parking facilities at the front and side.

Summary

The inspection was an announced full inspection. The home's last full inspection, was conducted on 01/10/2008 and raised three Actions and one Recommendation and rated the home as good. This inspection was followed up by an interim inspection on 14/03/2009, which confirmed that the previously made actions had been appropriately dealt with and made one additional recommendation. The home's, newly appointed, but not yet Registered Manager was available throughout this visit, as were several staff members for various times during the inspection. Several of the home's residents were present for some of the inspection exercise.

This inspection raised no new actions, but raised five additional recommendations. The current management arrangements continue to provide the home with effective and satisfactory leadership, however, there remains a requirement to formalise the management arrangements for the home by making application to register a suitable manager with the regulatory authority. This lack of a registered manager combined with a failure to appropriately maintain a programme of management visits, has unfortunately depressed the home's overall rating. This aside, the home continues to be a well-managed home because young people benefit from receiving a service in an environment that is centred on meeting their individual needs. Young people, receive high quality respite care, where good individual support is available and their health and wellbeing is seen as paramount. The overall judgement for the home on this inspection was satisfactory.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the home's last inspection and in response to the recommendation made, the home has introduced a recording system for physical interventions, which matches the requirements listed in National Minimum Standard (NMS) 22.9.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are supported so that their health and wellbeing are actively promoted. Staff involve and engage with young people, their parents or carers about a range of issues that enables them to be more aware about the individual health needs of each young person on each episode of care.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary and health needs. The home employs specialist catering staff who have appropriate qualifications and experience in providing the variety of specialist diets required by the young people who use this respite service. Many staff have undertaken specialist training in assisting young people at mealtimes and great emphasis is placed on making mealtimes an enjoyable activity. Young people indicated that they are encouraged to be involved in planning, shopping and cooking according to their abilities, interests and where appropriate as part of the independence training.

Menu records confirm that each young person is provided with a balanced diet based upon their own preferences and in line with their particular medical needs these records demonstrate the staffs clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy and nutritious diet.

All Staff complete training in basic food hygiene as part of the core training. Health issues that relate to ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith and belief are fully assessed in respect of each young person and are respected by the staff team.

The health and care needs of young people are identified and updated prior to each stay at the home, a clear plan for each young person detailing how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed, is kept on each young person. Good systems are in place to receive medication from and update medical history's with parents or carers at the start of each episode of respite care, equally good systems are in place to enable the safe return of medication and to inform parents and carers of any medical issues that have arisen during the young peoples stay at the home. All young people are registered with the required health professionals and staff are proactive in gathering health information if the need should arise.

Relevant information is obtained from a range of sources to ensure the home is fully informed about the health and emotional needs of young people. Young people are able to access appropriate services because the home is quick to respond to changing needs and circumstances. Young people's health needs are being well promoted because the home's records highlight the range of medical services that have been accessed.

The home's current manager is a strong advocate for the needs of young people in relation to accessing external advice and services. Young people, when appropriate, can access a variety of external agencies to ensure their particular needs are met. Communication systems in the home are strong; this ensures that key information is used and shared to shape the delivery of

the care provided. Young people benefit from these arrangements because they experience a service that is entirely focused on their needs.

Young people's health and safety is effectively promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following individual prescription instructions. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have access to first aid boxes and have been trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is also being evaluated by managers who monitor accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are clearly benefiting from a service that has an excellent focus on safeguarding and protection matters. Young people feel very safe in the home. Operational policies, procedures and staff guidance are used effectively to promote everybody's safety and welfare. Young people benefit from living in a home where there are good arrangements in place to ensure staff are trained and well informed about effective safeguarding practices. Young people are fully protected because staff recognise and understand their role in child protection and they know what action to take if there are concerns.

Information held on behalf of all young people is correctly stored in lockable facilities. Young people's privacy and confidentiality is promoted by sound guidance and good staff practice. Staff ensure that young people are treated with respect and that their dignity is not unnecessarily compromised. Children's administrative records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. Staff are aware of the children's right to appropriate privacy and how this may be safely promoted.

The welfare of young people is promoted by a clear robust complaints policy. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by young people, their families or carers. The organisation ensures staff are equipped and trained with the knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role and responsibilities regarding protection and safeguarding. The procedures in the home fully comply with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Young people live in a home where bullying is not allowed and where any form of unwanted behaviour is challenged. Staff provide regular and specific feedback to young people about their behaviour with a clear focus on setting fair and reasonable boundaries. Young people understand what is expected of them and they are rewarded for good behaviour. Very few formal sanctions or physical interventions are used and the home's philosophy is carried out in practice in terms of its behaviour management policy. Staff focus on the positives; young people are given many chances to adjust and improve inappropriate behaviours, staff are patient and listen to young people.

When sanctions and physical interventions are used, records for these events are completed. Incidents of restraint are reflected well in written documents which allows the home's manager to properly evaluate the necessity for a young person to be held.

Staff working at the children's home take positive steps to keep children and visitors safe from all environmental hazards including fire. For example, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis and staff within the home are all involved in these

routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone. Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), for electrical safety has been done on all equipment in the home and all safety equipment has been serviced with approved regularity and is properly maintained. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire drills are regularly completed, however, there is a need to ensure that one night time fire drill be conducted annually. The home has a variety of staff guidance and procedures relating to fire safety and evacuation procedures in case of fire, however, these currently do not refer specifically to night time fire evacuations and the specific problems that individual young people may have, due to their disabilities, in appropriately responding to a nocturnal emergency.

The home's manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment are checked to ensure they are safe to use. Young people live in a home which provides physical safety and security. This home does take the safety and welfare of the residents seriously and young people do live in a home which is generally both physically safe and secure.

The home has robust procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, as they are held centrally at the local authorities human resources department. The local authority has a clearly defined recruitment process, however, which protects young people by ensuring that all of the NMS requirements are met, prior to any staff member being deployed into any of their homes. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and show how young people are supported throughout their stay. The home is well supplied with specialist equipment to ensure that all young people have their needs met safely. Staff know young people well and are able to respond to them in a way that considers and respects them as individuals. External services are requested as necessary to meet the needs of individual young people.

As this home, provides very short-term respite care, weekends and three day stays during some school holidays, it does not need to reflect the degree of educational support and planning one would expect in a facility that replaces a young person's home. Whilst staff are very encouraging of young people, to develop to their full potential, particularly in respect of developing self help skills and independence skills. these fall outside of the general education remit. All young people who attend this home for respite do have appropriate education placements, however, these are supported by the young people's parents and carers and as such fall outside of the remit of the home.

Whilst enjoying respite at the home the young people are encouraged to make use of the centres specialist equipment and to undertake interesting and enjoyable activities. These activities are based around young peoples interests and specific abilities, they are appropriately risk assessed and staff have specific policies and procedures, particularly in respect of medication and safety in respect of taking the young people out on visits or activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Prior to their first admission to the home each young person has a respite care plan agreed, that identifies the needs of the young person and how the care for that young person will be implemented. Young people are allocated a key worker, who is responsible for liaising with parents and carers ensuring that the young person's needs are met. This helps young people to build a positive and rewarding relationship with their carers and promote their individual needs.

Review meetings are held at relevant intervals and staff prepare reports for young people's statutory reviews, identifying progress made and any issues that remain outstanding. Young people (where able) are involved in contributing to their reviews. This enables young people to influence plans for their future. Staff actively encourage and support contact to people significant in young people's lives, that matches the placing authority's agreement.

Records show that staff respect and value equality and diversity and there is clear evidence throughout the young people's placement plans that their individual needs are identified and addressed. Staff have a proactive approach to working with external agencies, social workers and other professionals. Consequently, all young people receive the individualised care they need.

Regular informative dialogue between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect the running of the home. The interactions between staff and young people reveal that the home continues to provide a relaxed setting where the involvement of children is used to positively shape the nature of the care provided. Staff meeting minutes demonstrate that issues with young people are dealt with using a consistent, safety conscious approach within clearly agreed parameters, the home's general records continue to support the view that staff are enabled to offer realistic boundaries, be consistent in practice and promote the welfare of each young person in a positive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is a purpose built, large modern unit with a small front area which provides car parking for several cars. There is also a parking area to the side of the Centre. There is a large bright, safe and pleasant rear garden with country views. This garden contains a wide range of young people's games, toys and play areas. Internally the residential unit occupies the ground floor and has several bright and cheerful communal and quiet areas. Bedrooms are all a good size with televisions fitted to wall brackets for safety. There is wheelchair access and a large bathroom fitted with mobility aids.

The location of the home offers access to public transport, good road links and leisure facilities. There are no known outstanding requirements from environmental health or the fire service. The home has an ongoing maintenance plan to ensure that it continues to provide suitable and safe accommodation for the young people living there.

Overall, this is a homely and comfortable care setting which is decorated and furnished to a good standard which creates a pleasant living environment. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

A programme of maintenance and repair is ongoing, however, this does not impact on the care young people receive. There are good systems in place that recognise maintenance issues and

those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority with evidence that demonstrates the owners invest generously in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people, parents, carers and staff have access to a Statement of Purpose and Young People's guide, which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home. Both the Statement of Purpose and young peoples guide have been reviewed since the last inspection and efforts are in hand to try to make both of these documents more accessible to the young people.

Since the home's last inspection a new manager has been appointed, however, she is still to go through the formal process of becoming the home's Registered Manager. Young people are being supported by a caring team of staff who are well supported by the new manager, however, the number of staff that have acquired the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People currently does not meet the 80% requirement of the National Minimum Standards (NMS).

All staff receive supervision from a senior member of staff each month, which supports them to undertake their roles and increase their knowledge and competence. New members of staff receive fortnightly supervision and are supported through an induction programme. Regular team meetings are held, which ensures that the staff team understand priorities for working with young people and a consistent approach is delivered.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. The home's manager is appropriately qualified, skilled, experienced and provides effective leadership to the staff team and young people. She is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Young people are provided with very good levels of supervision and support because staff manage their time effectively and are deployed in a way that meets their needs. There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. There are appropriate deputising arrangements in place in the absence of the home's manager and there is a formal on call system, if additional support is needed. The use of agency, temporary or casual staff, is kept to a minimum to enable young people to become familiar with their carers, the staff group try to cover most absences themselves, rather than deploying unfamiliar staff.

Staff are well supported and receive a wide range of training, which enables them to provide a good level of care to all young people placed at the home. The training needs of the staff are identified and monitored through supervision and annual appraisal.

The home's manager has developed a clear process to monitor the quality of care being provided by the home. Monthly monitoring visits, should be undertaken by a senior manager within the authority accompanied by an elected member, however, records indicated that April & May

had a combined visit and no visit was undertaken in July. Whilst it is acknowledged that it was the intention of the authority to conduct two visits in August to compensate for the lack of a visit in July, this does not meet the requirement to monitor the home on a monthly basis. The reports that were available indicated that these visits are robust and thorough giving an accurate picture of the functioning of the home.

The individual records for the young people in the home are very comprehensive, their needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. The promotion of their equality and diversity is outstanding. They contain a range of information about young people's history and progress, which matches the requirements set out in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

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 Children's 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 a night time fire drill is conducted at least every 12 months (NMS.26.8)
- ensure that all staff and children know the emergency evacuation procedures for the home including those for use at night, in case of fire (NMS 26.7)
- ensure as soon as possible that the home's manager applies for registration (NMS 34.3)
- ensure as soon as possible that 80% of care staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS.29.5)
- ensure that a visit is conducted at least once a month to the home in accordance with regulations, that covers all the aspects detailed in NMS 32.2 (NMS. 32.1 & 32.2).