

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joseph Hobson
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Date of last inspection	26 May 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 offers a short breaks service to children who are aged from four years old up to 17 years old. Young people who use the service have learning disabilities and many also have physical disabilities. The home can accommodate up to seven young people at any one time. Children can take part in a range of activities at the home and spend time with their friends.

Young people are able to use the service for several nights each month, usually for one or two nights at a time. Parents are also able to book stays of a week or so for their children. A day care service is also provided to some young people.

The home is purpose built, on one level and accessible in all areas to wheelchair users. There is a music room with a variety of instruments, a soft-play room and sensory room. There is also a communal area used as a lounge and dining room, which is equipped with toys, games and art materials. Young people sleep in individual bedrooms and there are specially equipped bathroom and shower facilities. At the rear of the property, there is an enclosed garden that has adapted play equipment. The home is situated in a quiet residential area and is close to local amenities.

Summary

This unannounced inspection was primarily focused upon assessing the staying safe key standards. Additionally, improvements since the last inspection were also looked at.

Although improvements have led to a judgement grade of good in staying safe, the overall grade remains as satisfactory. This is due to not all outcome areas being fully assessed.

Staff work effectively to ensure that children are kept safe. They are well trained and knowledgeable in policies and procedures to safeguard children's welfare. Children's privacy and confidentiality is respected. Procedures to deal with bullying, children's unauthorised absence from the home, and notifications to agencies about significant events affecting welfare, are in place. However, complaints information is not in a format accessible to children with learning disabilities. Improvements to vetting of agency staff ensures that only adults suitable to work with children are employed and that children's welfare is safeguarded.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has met the three actions made at the last inspection.

Improvements to the vetting of agency staff have been made. These procedures are known to the home's staff who verify checks before inducting agency staff into the home.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated with staff information and also reflects the home's conditions of registration.

Five recommendations were made at the last inspection.

The home has introduced new systems to record the outcomes and actions from children's reviews. However, the home's care planning arrangements do not ensure that plans contribute to transitional arrangements.

Systems for ensuring that staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal have improved, meeting the recommendation made at the last inspection. The home has yet to achieve the minimum ratio of 80% of staff with a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

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.

Children's privacy and dignity is given high priority. Staff are sensitive when undertaking personal and intimate care, ensuring that children's privacy is respected. Support to children is allocated in such a way as to provide continuity of intimate care provision to children. This ensures that intimate care, for the most part, is provided to individual children by the same staff each shift. Staffing rotas take into account the mix of children. For example, male staff are on rota to provide for the personal care needs of older male children when they stay at the home. Children's personal records are kept confidential and secure. Staff take care not to be overheard when making telephone calls and do not discuss children's personal information in the presence of other children or visitors to the home.

The home has a good policy and procedure in place to deal with complaints. However, the recording system does not include information in respect of the outcome or the action taken by the home to resolve complaints. There has been one complaint made to the home by a parent since the last inspection, which has been resolved. Information is available to children about how to make a complaint but this is not in an accessible format for children with learning disabilities. Children are able to make and receive telephone calls in private. Contact numbers for the regulator and children's counselling charities are openly displayed and can be accessed by children. The home is visited regularly by the local authority's children's rights service to seek children's views and discuss their concerns.

Staff at the home are well trained to identify and report any concerns about children's welfare in accordance with the home's comprehensive safeguarding procedures. These procedures are available to staff and are held in both paper and electronic formats. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of child protection procedures and the action needed to safeguard children's welfare. A parent said, 'The staff are excellent. They contact me straight away with any concerns they have. They have the kids interests at heart. I am not concerned at all when my son stays here. He is very well looked after and enjoys coming here. If he wasn't happy he would let me know.'

Although the needs of the children make the incidence of bullying less likely to occur than in mainstream children's homes, there is still a good anti-bullying policy in place. Staff remain vigilant to ensure that bullying does not occur and positively challenge behaviour which impacts upon other children.

Effective procedures are in place to deal with the incidence of children being absent without leave. There have been no incidents when children have gone missing. Staff reported that due to the vulnerability of the children at the home, notifications to the required agencies and parents would be made immediately upon discovering that a child was missing.

Satisfactory systems are in place to make notifications to the required agencies of any significant events which affect children's welfare. The home has made no notifications to the regulator since the last inspection.

The home works effectively with children to help them develop socially acceptable behaviour. Each child has a good quality positive handling plan in place, which includes strategies to be used by staff to deter the incidence of inappropriate behaviour. The ethos of the home is based on the use of rewards and positive reinforcement of good behaviour. The home does use sanctions. These are all permissible forms and are recorded in accordance with regulation. Restraint is seldom used, however, all staff have received training in the home's prescribed methods of control. There has been one incident of restraint recorded at the home since the last inspection. An appropriate record of this restraint was made, which met the requirements of regulation. Staff were observed to interact positively with children, engaging them in activities and used distraction techniques effectively to calm boisterous behaviour.

Risks to children's welfare are effectively identified and eliminated through a comprehensive system of assessment and risk management. The home has good quality policies and procedures dealing with health and safety. Staff are well trained to assess and identify possible risks to children's welfare. Good systems are in place to monitor the physical condition of the premises and make necessary repairs.

The home has a satisfactory system in place to vet and record all visitors to the home. The home's management has put in place new procedures to check the identity of agency staff and ensure that they have undergone the necessary vetting checks before they start work. The home has comprehensive policies and procedures for the recruitment of staff. The local authority's recruitment, vetting and selection systems and procedures are rigorous and ensure only adults suitable to work with children are employed at the home. These measures contribute to the home's overall effectiveness to safeguard children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

A system has been implemented for staff to record the results of statutory reviews and planning meetings on children's files. This meets the recommendation made at the last inspection. However, the judgement has not been changed as not all of the key standards for the outcome area have been inspected.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

The home maintains a care plan in respect of each child which identifies their individual needs. However, older children still do not have a comprehensive plan specifying the support and

assistance they will need to enable a successful transition to adulthood. The judgement for this outcome has not been changed as not all key standards have been inspected.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect staff changes and the home's conditions of registration.

The home has improved its systems to verify and record employment checks on agency staff. Permanent staff have been trained to verify these checks and induct agency staff prior to them commencing work, ensuring only suitable adults to work with children are employed. Improvements to the arrangements for staff to receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal ensure that staff are well supported. Staff receive monthly supervision as prescribed within the national minimum standards. The home has yet to achieve the minimum ratio of 80% of staff with the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent.

Not all of the key standards have been assessed, therefore the judgement has not been changed for this outcome area.

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
16	maintain a record of all complaints made by children and young people in the home and actions taken as a result. (Regulation 24.5)	23 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the children's guide is in a format accessible to children with learning disabilities (NMS 16.5)
- ensure there is a comprehensive plan specifying the support and assistance young people will need to receive to enable a successful transition to adulthood; in particular, ensure that the plan is consistent with and also contributes to any transition plan for children with disabilities and special educational needs (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that 80% of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29.5)