

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joseph Hobson
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Date of last inspection	14 January 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 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 children and/or young people at any one time. Children can take part in a range of activities at the home and spend time with their friends.

Children 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 daycare service is also provided to some children.

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 was an unannounced key inspection. Three children were present during the inspection.

Children's health is promoted and safeguarded well. Planning in respect of children's health is good. Medication systems are generally robust, however, an action has been raised in respect of the recording of controlled drugs.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded by a well trained and knowledgeable staff team. Children's privacy, confidentiality and dignity is given a high priority. The promotion of socially acceptable behaviour by children is good with the home making effective use of behaviour plans and risk assessments. There have been no physical interventions or sanctions imposed on children since the last inspection. Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff is robust and contributes towards ensuring children are cared for by suitable adults.

The premises are suitable to meet the needs of children with disabilities and the home is well equipped with specialist hoisting and mobility equipment. However, the decorative order of communal areas and children's bedrooms has deteriorated. Support for children's education is good and improvements have been made to transition planning. Staff are well supported and the home has a strong commitment to training and development. Management arrangements are good and this has contributed to the improvement in the overall quality rating from satisfactory to good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Good progress has been made to meet the one action and two of the three recommendations raised at the last inspection. The complaints book now includes a record of the outcome and

the action taken by the home to resolve complaints. Complaints information has been made available in a format accessible to children with learning disabilities. Similarly, the home has developed a transition/pathway plan in a child-friendly format using pictures and symbols.

The number of staff who are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People has yet to reach the minimum ratio of 80%. Therefore, the recommendation has still to be met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home provides good support to meet children's health needs. These are clearly identified and recorded within children's individual files. Health plans are prescriptive and include information about children's general health and medical conditions, support arrangements, GP and dental registrations, consent for emergency treatment and administration of medication, specialist equipment requirements, and comprehensive moving and handling plans. Staff provide a range of physical activities to promote children's health and fitness. Healthy eating is promoted and the home caters well for any specialist dietary requirements. Training is provided to staff in respect of autism, epilepsy and some medical interventions, for example gastronomy feeding.

Arrangements for administering medication to children are generally good. There are effective procedures, which are known to staff. Staff are trained in the administration of medicines. Systems for the receipt, administration, recording and disposal of medication help ensure that medication is safely administered to children and their welfare is safeguarded. However, controlled medication is not recorded in a controlled drugs register. The impact of this on children's health and welfare is minimal.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has good quality policies and procedures to ensure children's privacy is respected and their confidentiality is safeguarded. Staff promote children's dignity at all times when providing personal and intimate care. Children's information is kept secure and maintained confidentially. Staff are careful not to speak about children's personal information or circumstances in the presence of other children or visitors. Children are able to make and receive telephone calls in private.

The home has improved its system for recording of complaints in respect of the outcome and the action taken to resolve issues, meeting the action raised at the last inspection. Complaints information is now available in a format accessible to children with disabilities and uses pictures and symbols. One parental complaint has been received since the last inspection. This was dealt with in accordance with the home's comprehensive complaints procedures. This complaint was later withdrawn. Staff have a sound knowledge of the complaints procedures and are skilled at advocating for the children in their care.

There are comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance for safeguarding children's welfare. These procedures are known to staff who demonstrate a good understanding of the actions required to protect vulnerable children from abuse. All staff are trained in child protection and systems to record and report concerns about welfare are robust. One child when asked if they were happy at the home, nodded and said, 'Yes' and 'I like it.'

The incidence of bullying is very low. However, staff remain vigilant and ensure that any bullying behaviour is challenged and dealt with effectively. Staff have been trained in the home's countering bullying policy, which is detailed. Particularly comprehensive is the policy relating to racial discrimination and harassment. Systems are in place to record and report all incidents of bullying and harassment.

High staffing levels ensure that the supervision of children is very good and staff know the whereabouts of children at all times. The vulnerability of the children keeps this a high priority and staff know to make an immediate notification to parents and agencies in the event of a child going missing. There have been no such occurrences since the last inspection.

Effective arrangements are in place to help children develop socially acceptable behaviour. Policies, procedures and guidance in respect of dealing with challenging behaviour, the use of physical intervention, and the use of measures of control are comprehensive. Staff are trained and skilled in using strategies, such as distraction and diffusion, to manage children's behaviour, significantly reducing the need for physical intervention. Children benefit from having good quality individualised behaviour plans and risk assessments in place, which record the most effective strategies to be used. Sanctioning of children is minimal with the home placing a strong emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour. Records of sanctions and physical interventions meet with the requirements of regulation and confirm that there have been no incidents since the last inspection.

The home undertakes the required checks in respect of fire, emergency and safety equipment. Fire drills and evacuations are held frequently and all staff are trained in fire evacuation procedures. There are comprehensive risk assessment and management arrangements in place and the home is generally free from hazards. However, the tops of the taps in children's bedrooms have been removed leaving stems which are sharp edged and pose a potential hazard.

Systems and procedures for the safe recruitment, selection and vetting of staff are robust. Satisfactory systems are in place to monitor and vet all visitors to the home. Together these arrangements contribute to the safeguarding of children's welfare through ensuring that only suitable people have access to this vulnerable group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive care and support in accordance with their individually assessed needs recorded within their care plans. Each child has an allocated key worker who holds responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of children's respite support, liaising with parents and professionals, attending review meetings, maintaining records and drawing up and reviewing care plans and risk assessments. One child responded, 'Nice, I like them,' when asked their view of what the staff were like.

Support to children to access education and learning is good. The home maintains a copy of each child's statement of special educational needs and personal education plan/individual education plan where these are in place. Staff maintain regular contact with schools, attending review meetings and arranging school transport as required. The home provides an extensive range of play and development opportunities to children, supporting their learning and development of self-help and communication skills. Regular visits are made to local attractions

and places of interest and children are engaged in numerous in-house activities, games and creative pastimes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The quality of care planning arrangements for children is good. Plans are sufficiently detailed, individualised and are aligned to the Every Child Matters outcome areas. Plans are drawn up in consultation with parents who sign them to confirm their agreement. Placement and care plans are reviewed and kept updated. Staff attend review meetings and draft reports in respect of children's progress and the outcomes of reviews. Review arrangements are satisfactory and are held within prescribed timescales.

Children are able to make and receive telephone calls in private. Parents and relatives can visit at anytime during children's respite stays. Staff keep in regular contact with parents to share information and give updates on progress. Regular home visits are made by children's key workers and relationships between the home and parents are good. Some stays are planned in consultation with children in order that groups of friends can access the service together.

Staff are skilled in the use of a variety of communication methods and techniques. These include the use of signing, symbols and pictures. Staff are adept at understanding children's body language and gestures to gauge the views of children who do not have audible language and advocate on their behalf.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home has developed and introduced a new format for pathway/transition plans for young people. This meets the recommendation made at the last inspection. The plans are in a child-friendly format and use symbols and pictures, which are used regularly in the home, and are understood by young people. Close links are maintained between the home and adult services to aid transition and identify future placements and resources for young people moving on. The home provides a range of activities and experiences for young people to develop personal, social and independence skills. For example, young people are supported to bake and cook simple meals, go shopping and manage money, and take part in community-based activities.

The layout and location of the home is appropriate to meet the needs of the children and young people who access respite care. The home, which is on one level, has sufficient adaptations and specialist equipment to ensure good access to all users. Overall the premises, which are homely, are maintained to a satisfactory standard. However, the decorative order of communal areas and children's bedrooms has deteriorated and many walls are scuffed and marked. The home has sufficient specialist and adapted bathrooms and toilets.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are skilled in ensuring that children's views are promoted through creative use of communication methods. This enables children to make a meaningful contribution and participate in all aspects of the home, promoting their development, and extending their skills and life experiences. Respect for children's privacy, confidentiality and dignity is given high priority.

There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place which meets the requirements of regulation. The home has developed a children's guide, which includes symbols and pictures and is accessible to children with a learning disability.

Support arrangements for staff are well established. Staff receive regular monthly supervision from a senior member of staff. Policies and procedures are available in both electronic and paper formats. Staff reported that they receive good support from management and that managers operate an 'open door' policy. The home has made progress in the number of staff who have achieved an appropriate qualification. However, currently four members of staff do not hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People, although all are registered. There is a strong commitment to staff training and development, which is given a high priority. Staff reported that the quality of training is good. Staff demonstrated throughout the duration of the inspection that they are well equipped and sufficiently skilled to meet the needs of children in placement.

The home is well staffed. Staffing levels are agreed and are based on children's individual assessed needs. Staff rotas allow sufficient opportunity for handovers, training, supervision and support.

There are satisfactory arrangements to monitor the functioning of the provision. A report is made of all unannounced visits conducted on behalf of the registered provider and a copy of the report is sent to the home's management and the regulator. In addition to these visits, the manager undertakes a monthly review of the quality of the care in accordance with regulation.

Children's records are maintained in accordance with all of the matters required by regulation.

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
26	ensure that all identifiable risks to children's welfare are eliminated, particularly that the taps in children's bedrooms are made safe (Regulation 23)	26 May 2010
13	keep an accurate record of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed, particularly in respect of controlled drugs. (Regulation 21)	26 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that 80% of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29.5)

- ensure that children's bedrooms and communal areas are decorated to a good standard.
(NMS 24.2)