

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Urding
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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, that 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 full inspection. All of the key standards were inspected along with an assessment of progress made since the last inspection. The overall outcome for children and young people is satisfactory with some good and outstanding practice.

Children and young people's health needs are very well promoted with some excellent practice relating to provision and monitoring of healthy diets. Children and young people are safeguarded because staff are well trained and understand the children they care for well. Staff share positive relationships with young people, their parents and professionals, which promotes cohesive and individual planning. Children and young people enjoy life and achieve well because staff are pro-active and outward looking. However, the system for recruiting agency staff is in its infancy and has not been adequately implemented to demonstrate that safe recruitment practice is followed in every instance. This places children and young people at risk. Young people are not well prepared for life beyond the home because there is no transition planning in place. Staff are not being supervised or appraised often enough, which compromises service delivery. Records of reviews of placement plans are not being shared with the home in a timely fashion, which increases the likelihood of needs not being met. There is a minor shortfall with regards to the home's statement of purpose.

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 made satisfactory progress in meeting the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. Improvements have been made in relation to the environment with regards to the intrusion of the bell attached to the front door, which has now been disarmed and does not ring every time the door is opened. Recording shortfalls in relation to bullying, restraint, fire and reviewing the quality of service have been addressed. This increases accountability in practice and has improved the quality of monitoring of practice in the home.

An improvement plan is still not in place. However, steps are being made to devise and implement this in line with the monitoring system.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent attention is given to maintaining and promoting young people's health. Dietary requirements are very well managed and met. Children and young people's likes and dislikes are catered for and staff assist children sensitively at mealtimes. The home has established an efficient system for ensuring that all children resident receive healthy, well balanced and nutritious meals during their stay.

The children's health remains the responsibility of their parents. However, staff promote health well because they are well trained and have detailed information about specific health needs. Health care plans are fully implemented. There are well established links with specialist health professionals, so that health care is seamlessly provided between home and children's short breaks in the home.

Medication is well managed and accountable. Staff are knowledgeable about a range of conditions affecting young people's health and meet their needs arising out of any disability. The home follows best practice guidance outlined by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Staff are trained in first aid and follow emergency protocols with regards young people's medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and young people stay in a safe, well managed environment where there is good attention to health and safety matters. Staff ensure that children are safely looked after because they are well trained in safeguarding and understand how to promote children's well-being. Arrangements for complaints are well managed because staff advocate on the children's behalf and liaise well with parents. Staff promote dignity in their practice and respect children and young people's privacy.

Staff enjoy positive relationships with children and young people. They manage challenging behaviour in a low key way, in line with behaviour management strategies and ensure that their responses are clear, measured and fair. Bullying is a low risk in this environment because staff supervise all children well and deal with arising issues promptly with the appropriate people.

The recruitment of staff is inconsistently managed. Staff recruited directly by the council undergo rigorous checks to ensure that the risk of children being exposed to potential abusers is reduced. However, practice relating to the recruitment of agency staff is less well developed because staff are not confident in using the new system and are unclear whether the same levels of scrutiny are afforded. Subsequently, there have been occasions when the checking of identification and Criminal Records Bureau checks takes place at the door of the home, prior to staff starting shift. This does not ensure that a thorough assessment of suitability takes place by appropriately trained staff and is over reliant on care workers making safe decisions. The vigilance of the manager in this home has ensured that some checking has taken place and children have not been placed at risk in this instance. However, the implementation of this

system is flawed and does not ensure that children will be consistently and adequately safeguarded.

The system for monitoring visitors to the home is safely managed by staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff support children and young people well during their stay. Programmes of care are tailored to individual needs. Staff receive good levels of training so that they can communicate effectively with young people. Key workers are identified on admission but children say that they can go to any adult if they are worried about anything. Children and young people are integrated well in the home and the community. It is common practice for staff to re-establish friendships and to reintegrate into the group when disagreements occur. This counters the affect of isolation. Risk is well managed.

Staff have well established links with schools that young people attend. They facilitate transport to schools during periods that young people stay and work closely with teaching staff to ensure consistent working practice between school and home. It is common practice for staff to assist in school or observe, so that the packages of care can be agreed upon and implemented in both settings. This is excellent practice and ensures that children receive optimum levels of support to promote learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Detailed placement plans on admission inform staff well how to meet the needs of children and young people receiving short term breaks. Plans are completed in partnership with parents and programmes of care agreed. Key workers attend children's reviews and adapt placement plans as needs change. However, there are delays in receiving the minutes of reviews and arising recommendations, which compromises ongoing placement planning.

Parents receive an admission pack providing them with good information about the home. Within this young people and their parents are provided with information about how to make a complaint if they are concerned about the level of service. The medication policy of the home is also shared with parents and is in the process of being reviewed to make this easier to understand. The admissions process is well managed and appropriate decisions are made about young people's admissions to the home. This ensures that staff can meet the needs of all children accommodated.

Staff continue to work well with parents during a child's placement and daily reports are completed and copies supplied to parents to inform them of their child's time in the home. Children and young people can talk privately to parents during their stay and staff make contact promptly about arising issues. Staff are striving to improve services for children and their parents by ensuring continued effective consultation. A series of coffee mornings have been planned, so that parents can share their views and contribute to improving standards in the home. This is excellent practice.

Staff practice inclusively and ensure that children can make positive choices about the care they receive. Children's views are regularly sought via meetings and on a more informal basis

when staying in the home. Children say that they are given choices at mealtimes and about activities and decor. Staff place a high importance on keeping children well informed whilst carrying out personal care tasks. Staff value and respect the children they care for.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

Young people's life chances are reduced because staff do not have the information to inform them well of future plans for young people. Pathway plans are not provided to staff in the home, so they are unable to focus plans of care to reflect individual needs regarding independence. Staff do undertake some independence work with young people by encouraging self care skills and cooking. However, this is not focused enough to ensure that the home can make an effective contribution to a young person's preparation for their transition to adulthood.

The home is spacious and well adapted to meet the needs of children accommodated. A programme of maintenance and re-decoration is in place to which children can contribute. Clean, homely and attractive bedrooms are provided for children and young people during their stay, along with a range of facilities to meet their needs. The home complies with environmental health and fire service requirements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A statement of purpose is in place that defines the service provided by the home. However, information about staff working in the home is not current and does not give accurate information about how the service is being managed. The children and young people's guide to the home is in an appropriate format and provides children and young people with good information about services and facilities that the home provides.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children and young people are individually well supported with their health and education needs. Staff communicate with children using their preferred methods and their practice throughout promotes choice and inclusion. The home works well with outside agencies to promote outcomes. However, links with the transition team and the promotion of independence for young people are less well developed.

The home is appropriately staffed and there is accountability in the way that shifts are managed. Senior and out of hours support is provided. Staff are supported to undertake their roles appropriately because training in line with the needs of children accommodated is provided. However, some staff say that the training booking process is lengthy and puts people off applying for further training. The home is working towards qualifying 80 per cent of staff to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people.

Staff feel supported whilst they are on duty and senior staff are approachable. However, formal supervision is not taking place consistently on a monthly basis. Appraisals of staff performance are also not taking place annually. This reduces the formal guidance that staff receive about improving their practice and communication and may compromise service delivery.

Effective monitoring systems are in place to evaluate and improve the quality of care in the home. These are outcome based, which provides a useful focus for self improvement. However, the home has yet to devise and implement a development plan linked to this.

Detailed and clear records are kept on children's lives in the home.

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
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to all persons working at a children's home, in particular ensure that agency staff have successfully passed the checks that are required within the last 12 months of which there must be evidence placed on their file (Regulation 26(3)(d))	11 June 2009
1	keep under review and revise the statement of purpose to reflect the changes in staffing and conditions of registration as outlined in Schedule 1 (Regulation 5(a))	11 June 2009
31	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, in particular with regards the operation and understanding of the recruitment of agency staff(Regulation 27(4)(a)).	11 June 2009

Recommendations

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

- record the results of statutory reviews and placement plans on children's files and identify individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews (NMS 3.4)
- 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 staff in the home receive at least one and half hours of supervision from senior staff each month (NMS 28.2)
- ensure all staff have their performance appraised at least annually (NMS 28.7)
- ensure that 80 per cent of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29.5)
- devise and implement a written development plan for the home (NMS 33.5).