

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035241
Inspection date	05/05/2011
Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/10/2010
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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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by a trust which provides care and education to children and adults who are deaf. The children attend a community special school for deaf children which is next to the home and this is also operated by the trust.

The children's home is registered to accommodate four children of either sex aged from 5 to 17 years who have a sensory impairment.

The home comprises a lounge, kitchen, dining room, study area, utility room, two bathrooms and toilets. Each young person has their own single bedroom. There is a staff office/bedroom where a member of staff sleeps-in each night and the home also employs a waking night staff to attend to any night time needs.

The home is surrounded by its own walled gardens, driveway and parking area. Local amenities are close by and there is public transport to the town centre. The home has its own vehicle for transporting young people.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people benefit from well planned care which is personalised to their specific needs. Initial placement plans are reviewed monthly and amended consistently to reflect the progress each child is making. Young people's views are sought in house meetings and acted upon. For example, they said they were embarrassed going out in the house car when it was dirty. The staff used that as an opportunity to develop further skills with the young people and they all washed the car together before going out in it again.

Well organised and supportive contact arrangements mean that the children are able to maintain fulfilling and positive relationships with their parents. One young person's mother said, 'I am happy about her development, she is more independent and she is very safe. I am happy for her that she is there'.

The young people are clearly happy, relaxed and confident. They stated that they felt safe in their home and were proud of their bedrooms. They make good progress in relation to their starting points on admission to the home where their individual progress is recognised and celebrated by the committed, caring and effective staff team. The registered manager and trustees understand the strengths and areas of improvement necessary. They are developing plans to provide more space for the young people to utilise which will enable them to have a quiet space.

The staff team are well trained and reflect the needs of the young people. Several staff members are hearing impaired and all staff are trained in the use of British Sign Language to levels 1 and 2. This enables them to communicate effectively with the young people.

Managers and trustees are aware of the new standards and are taking steps to implement them. These are not all in place as yet.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
16 (2001)	revise the procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission to have regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16 (4) (b))	11/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure that children know their rights to advocacy and how to access an advocate, and how to contact the Children's Rights Director. (NMS 1.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people receive the individual support they need to develop their full potential from their starting points. A living skills programme is in place which assesses each person's abilities on admission and personalised programmes are developed for each young person. These are regularly updated and include practical lessons such as crossing the road and using public transport.

Young people are encouraged and supported to contribute to their own care plans and how the home is run. Each young person has a key worker with whom they have regular one-to-one sessions as well as individual time with other staff members. The use of the comprehensive placement plans record achievements and involve young people in planning goals effectively. They are all offered the services of an independent advocate separate to the home with whom they meet regularly. There is information available to young people in suitable formats about Ofsted and outside advocacy services in the Young People's Guide and on an information board. However, there is no information about the Children's Rights Director.

The young people attend house meetings every two weeks. These are fully recorded and signed by the young people. Issues raised by the young people are initially addressed in the meeting and outcomes fed back to them. For example, a young person expressed a desire to change bedrooms. This was discussed at a staff meeting and with the registered manager and the young person informed that this had been agreed.

Young people's health is promoted well. They are offered a healthy diet that they can help plan. All the menus reflect the cultural and health needs of the young people and all of the staff have been trained in food hygiene. Young people are fully supported to eat food that is relevant to their culture and to share this with the other young people. There are many opportunities for young people to take part in physical exercise within the community. They have membership at the local leisure centre and regularly attend swimming and football sessions. This positively benefits them in promoting exercise, developing social and life skills and building self-esteem. At the request of one of the young people outside play equipment has also been purchased for use at the home.

Young people receive excellent support to meet their health needs both from within the organisation and from outside agencies. Young people regularly visit their doctor, dentist and optician and details of each of these are recorded on their personal plans. Their health plans clearly identify their specific needs and are updated as necessary. For example, one young person's insulin changes are recorded in their health plans and in a special book which monitors his food intake and how to measure amounts. The school nurse is present every day during term time. A full time mental health professional is also available and is working closely with the home regarding the specific needs of one of the young people at present. Other specialist services, for example, a diabetic nurse, provide support for the young people and extra training for staff. All of the staff have received training in administering medication and first aid. All medication administered, be it prescribed or following an accident, such as a plaster, is recorded and then checked by the on-site nurse. This provides accountability and ensures the young people's needs are met.

The young people all attend the adjacent school where each is achieving well with full attendance. They are encouraged to complete homework when they return from school and their progress is marked with rewards and celebrated. Positive alternative activities are planned for times when a young person has been excluded because of behavioural issues within the school. There is a close relationship between the staff in the home and in the school which promotes the education experience for the children.

Young people are enabled, encouraged and supported to participate in activities within their local community which reflect their interests, religion of choice and cultural needs. For example, one young person is taken to services at the Baptist church, she wishes to attend, each Sunday and the majority of the children and young people are members of the Scouts and attend weekly.

Well organised arrangements are in place for young people to maintain contact with their parents. Excellent provision is made to enable the young people to go home every other weekend and for holidays. Clear plans are made with the young people as to whom they want to have contact, with the agreement of their parents and social workers. The young people are able to contact their parents by phone and email and can have their family and friends visit them within their home. One social worker said, 'I have been there three or four times as I visit every six weeks. I have always found the place to be well managed and very comfortable. We are more than satisfied with the house and the safeguarding measures. She sometimes prefers being in there to home because of the resources available to her. She's been there since September and settled in very well and she has people that understand her and meet her needs'.

The home records contacts from those significant to young people and maintains regular communication with their parents. The registered manager has developed a comprehensive questionnaire with which she elicits responses from parents as to how they see the home being run for their children. She uses the information gained to ensure that cultural needs are maintained and that parents views are incorporated in planning. One parent wrote, 'I can trust 100% who work with him, he is well looked after, I am proud of all staff who work with him and thanks also to the kindness of the registered manager'.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Young people thrive in the stimulating, positive and constructive environment within the home. The caring and nurturing staff team work to promote positive behaviours and deflect negative behaviour in order for the children to progress. Inappropriate behaviour is addressed when it occurs and staff take advice and guidance from other professionals where necessary to better understand and cope with adverse situations. For example, the impact of attachment disorder in enabling a child to bond with other young people and staff. One staff member said, 'It's good here, we get a lot of training on how to support and control the kids. It feels like we are a family together. We make them feel at home. It is a good team to work in, we support each other and are there for each other'.

Young people are encouraged and empowered to read and comment upon information kept about them and their views are recorded. One young person said 'I'm happy living in the house, in school I like swimming, art & making things, I like going home and I like seeing all my family, everything is good'. The same young person did not like the fence around the grounds of the home but was satisfied when it was explained to him that this was for his, and the other children's, safety.

The home celebrates and promotes the young people's achievements and diversity. All staff members use sign language with the young people who are able to communicate their needs effectively. A complaints system is in place which all young people know how to use but they have not made any complaints. Any issues are dealt with as they arise and the young people are asked at every house meeting if they wish to make any complaints.

Staff work closely with the staff in the school attended by all of the children. They receive daily reports from the school as to any incidents that have occurred there. They assist the children with their homework on their return from school and take an active interest in any projects. Children are encouraged to view education and their attainments as something positive and beneficial for them. They speak positively about their school experiences.

There are good procedures to follow before any young person is admitted in to the children's home. Following referral the register manager visits each young person in their home with their family and makes an initial assessment. The young person is then invited to visit the children's home and the school so they can see what they are like. They are then offered the opportunity to stay in the home for two days for a further assessment. However, the outcomes of these assessments and the likely effects of the new child's admission upon the existing group of residents are not recorded clearly and not available in the young person's file. This means that staff are less well-informed about the needs of the incoming child and potential issues with the other young people which could have a detrimental effect on progress. The registered manager is aware of this omission and in the process of developing a protocol.

Young people live in a detached house on the site of an educational establishment. The front of the house is on a residential street and the back leads to other buildings on the main site. There is a fence around the property keeping it separate from the

main site and promoting the children's safety. The young people each have their own bedroom which they can personalise to their preference, including where they position their bedroom furniture. The bathroom and toilets have appropriate door locks on them which can be opened by staff from outside in case of emergency but which young people can lock to maintain their privacy. Local amenities including a large leisure centre are nearby. The home has a large lounge and kitchen with dining area. The young people, staff and any visitors eat there together. There is a separate area with computers, with internet safeguards, for the young people to use for homework, games or to contact their parents. A Unicom telephone is available for the young people's use and they can also use a mobile telephone for texting. The large garden is equipped with leisure activities and is well used by the young people. The management of the home are in the process of developing plans to extend the home to include a separate office for staff and a quiet room for young people to use. The staff are committed to making the house a home for the people who live there and the young people take evident pride in their surroundings.

Equality and diversity promotion within the home is very good. Young people are taught how to respect one another and be non-judgemental by the positive examples of the staff. Any issues are addressed immediately and young people talked to about the effect of judgmental behaviours. Staff are all trained in equality and diversity. All staff within the home and the school are trained in British Sign language and interpreting services are provided in both educational and statutory reviews. This means that young people are empowered and supported to fully participate in the planning and review of their care and expressing their wishes.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

The young people said that they were happy and safe here in the home. They are actively encouraged by staff to share their feelings and discuss any concerns. Positive behaviours are encouraged by the committed and nurturing staff team therefore young people learn to take responsibility for their own actions. Young people have reward charts and a sanctions system is in place. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviours. One young person explained that he had been angry that he could not see his father, who was unavailable that weekend, which was why he had behaved in the way he did. He accepted that the consequence of his actions were that he would not be able to use the computer for a night.

Comprehensive individual risk assessments are prepared for each child. They cover every activity the child may be involved in and include potential behavioural management issues as well as health needs. Staff understand the need to regularly review the assessments and address the particular vulnerabilities of each child. Risk assessments are cross referenced with incident reports and any episode where a child is moved is recorded as a restraint. There have not been any physical restraints since the last inspection.

The registered manager monitors all incident reports to ascertain whether there are any patterns emerging and to address any concerns. The home has an excellent and robust bullying policy which is fully understood and implemented by staff and young people. The young people do not say that there is any bullying. One parent said, 'Yes I am happy with supervision and they keep in touch by text to let me know my child is okay and safe'.

A much improved, comprehensive and robust safeguarding policy is in place which is linked with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. All staff have training in safeguarding and know how to implement the procedures. The Local Authority Designated Officer stated that, 'I've trained all the staff on safeguarding and the manager has been on training with me for the designated person. They are very good at contacting me if there is a concern. I have no concerns about them, I would say the children are safe there and if they have any doubts or questions they ring me'.

The registered manager stated that young people do not go missing from the home. However, the Missing Children policy has not been updated since February 2008 and does not cover all of the points in the new standards or link with the local police or safeguarding board. This means that staff may not know what to do if a child was missing and they would not be appropriately safeguarded.

The home has a consistent and long term staff team and there have not been any new appointments since the last inspection. Young people are able to build positive relationships and thrive in this stable environment. They further benefit from having staff members who are hearing impaired giving them positive role models. The home and organisation have robust recruitment policies and staff have a job description which clearly details their responsibilities. One staff member stated, 'It is a good team to work in, we support each other and are there for each other. I am happy

here and have been here for eight years.' The children are further protected by robust procedures to monitor any visitors to the home. One parent stated '100% I know my child is safe in residence'.

Efficient fire drills are conducted at different times of the day and night on a monthly basis. Young people have a red flashing alarm in their bedrooms to alert them. Records are kept of who was present, the time taken to evacuate the building, which route was taken out of the building, how long the process took and how the young people reacted. All staff members have had fire training and all have taken part in the drills. All equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires is properly inspected and maintained by professional technicians. The young people are therefore effectively safeguarded.

The premises are well maintained and in a safe condition. Professional technicians and engineers routinely and regularly service the electrical equipment and gas appliances.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

The registered manager and trustees of the home and organisation have addressed all of the nine requirements and eight recommendations made as a result of the last inspection. All of which have been met apart from one which has been made the subject of a further recommendation. Children benefit from the structured and stable environment achieved by these improvements.

A new bound and numbered book is in place that ensures that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose. All documentation in respect of staff required in Schedule 4 is up to date and securely stored in the home and an up to date enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau check will be in place before any person is employed at the children's home. All permanent appointments are subject to the completion of a three month probationary period including a monthly review.

The written policy regarding disciplinary matters has been updated by the registered manager and approved by trustees to provide that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, of a child accommodated in the home to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instigated. In addition the registered manager conducted a specific team event on the updated policies to ensure a consistent approach. Young people and children are protected by the strong guidance issued to staff.

The registered manager and trustees have updated the home's Statement of Purpose to comply with Schedule 1 (Regulation 4). This document clearly details the aims and objectives of the home, staffing levels and qualifications of the staff team and the services and facilities provided by the home. This provides parents, placing authorities and staff with comprehensive information as to how children are cared for within the values and principles covered by the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The registered manager has reviewed, established and maintains a system for monitoring all of the matters set out in Schedule 6, on a monthly basis, for improving the quality of care provided in the home. This takes into account the views of young people, parents and placing authorities. This also incorporates robust protocols for notifying Ofsted of any significant events. There have not been any notifications since the last inspection.

Children's records are clear, up to date and available for young people to read and comment upon if they wish. They are kept in a locked cabinet to maintain confidentiality. Robust recruitment, selection and vetting procedures are in place for all staff members employed across the organisation.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a well trained and supported staff team. Good training is provided for staff at all levels. The induction programme attended by new staff is to the standards of the Children's Workforce Development Council and most of the staff have a National Vocational Qualification in care at level 3. Further training is also provided in specialist subjects such as Sexual Exploitation and relating to health and behaviour.

All policies are available to staff both in electronic form and in hard copy. The organisation is committed to ensuring that staffing levels are high with a balance of hearing and deaf staff on duty. In relation to ensuring young people's needs are met, one social worker stated, 'She's been there since September and settled in very well and she has people that understand her and meet her needs. As the only girl there they always make sure there is a female staff member available for her to talk to when she gets in from school'.

The trustees and registered manager oversee the day-to-day running of the home and ensure that the quality of care is monitored regularly by an external person. This person visits the home monthly on an unannounced basis and considers and makes recommendations regarding all relevant issues. In addition, the organisation has set up a safeguarding steering group for the home and school which is chaired by an independent person.

Young people thrive on the strong commitment to and promotion of equality and diversity within the home. The experienced and nurturing registered manager and staff team know and understand the young people within their care and recognise their strengths and weaknesses. The ethos and culture of the home, detailed in the Statement of Purpose and demonstrated in practice, celebrates each young person's achievements in line with their disabilities and cultural identity. This comprehensively supports young people to develop a positive identity and take pride in themselves and their abilities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.