

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 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 bathroom 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.

Summary

The overall quality rating is inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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

This was an unannounced, full inspection and so all the key national minimum standards (NMS) were assessed. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the five requirements and three recommendations made at the previous inspection on 7 June 2010. These were about child protection procedures and child protection training, the duty to notify Ofsted of significant events, the promotion of privacy in bathrooms and risk assessments of bullying.

At the time of the current inspection, the children's home was accommodating four young people and two had gone home for the half-term holiday. The inspector spoke to the other two young people about the quality of care they receive.

Overall outcomes for young people are poor, resulting in a significant number of requirements and recommendations being made. However, there are many areas of good practice particularly associated with promotion of health, education, accommodation, preparation for leaving care, training and the quality of relationships between the staff and young people. But significant shortfalls in promotion of safety and organisational issues mean that overall outcomes are weak.

Some important requirements from the previous inspection have not been met, despite being easy to comply with. Recruitment procedures are weak and the associated records provide poor accountability.

Sometimes the staff have to move young people due to challenging behaviour. This meets the definition of restraint but it is not being recorded as such and so accountability for its use is weaker.

Internal monthly monitoring of care does not cover all the necessary issues and it does not demonstrate that the views of parents, young people and placing authorities have been considered. Self-improvement in the quality of care is also less likely to occur because this monitoring does not create a clear action plan.

The staff are not adequately informed about young people because the outcomes of pre-admission assessments and statutory reviews are not readily available.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are enabled to follow the religion of their choice and their cultural needs are also met well. A good level of staffing and positive relationships between the young people and a consistent team of staff help young people to feel secure and valued as individuals.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home's child protection procedures have been updated and now comply with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and national minimum standards. The staff have all received training in the new procedures. Consequently, the arrangements in place to ensure concerns about children's welfare are passed on to others are much better.

However, a requirement to update the disciplinary policy remains unmet and the date by which this should have been completed expired four months ago. Consequently staff are less well-informed about the consequences of failing to pass on concerns about young people's welfare to others.

The registered persons have also not complied with a requirement to notify Ofsted of all significant events. This makes it harder for the regulator to respond, if necessary, to any serious concerns that may arise.

The young people benefit from greater privacy in the bathroom because blinds have been fitted at the windows. However, privacy and dignity are not fully promoted. Despite a recommendation made at the previous inspection, appropriate door locks have not yet been fitted to the bathroom and toilet.

The arrangements in place to counter bullying are much better. The staff now separately assess, for each young person, both the risks of them bullying others and of them being bullied by others.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health is promoted well.

Young people are offered a healthy diet and they can partake in a range of physical activities including football and swimming. All the staff have received training in food hygiene and diets reflect the cultural and health-related needs of young people. One young person said 'the staff sit down with us to discuss what we want to eat for the week ahead'.

Young people receive a lot of support to meet their health needs, both from within the Organisation and from outside. For example, a nurse is at the school every weekday during the daytime and young people also gain support from a full-time mental health professional. Other specialist nurses also provide support for young people and they provide training for the staff. One young person added 'we get a medical check-up every year'.

The staff have all received training in the administration of medication and in first aid. The administration of medication is recorded appropriately and this provides accountability.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Overall, despite some aspects of good practice, outcomes associated with promotion of safety are poor.

Young people receive the privacy they need when they need it. They have lockable doors and can keep personal items secure in their personal bedroom safe. They also have ready access to a telephone. However, due to the design of the door locks, young people could potentially open the door locks to the bathroom and toilet from the outside. Ofsted identified this concern at the previous inspection and made a recommendation to change the locks. The registered persons have not fitted new locks yet due to problems with the supplier.

The Registered Manager and staff support young people to raise any concerns with them and most issues are dealt with quickly and informally. For example, one young person said 'if I was unhappy about something I would just tell the manager or the staff and they would sort it out. I know I could also fill in a complaint form'.

Since the previous inspection, all the staff have received training in child protection. In discussion they showed they are clearly aware of how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. However, the disciplinary policy does not make it explicit that failure to inform a senior person about welfare concerns can be grounds for disciplinary proceedings. This shortfall was identified at the previous inspection

and Ofsted made a requirement that the policy be amended within a week. Four months later, the registered persons have still not complied with the requirement. Similarly, a requirement was made to notify Ofsted of all significant events. This is so that the regulator can maintain an awareness of concerns that may arise. However, the registered persons have not notified Ofsted of all such events.

Young people and staff confirmed that there is no bullying in the home. Risk assessments for bullying are clear and comprehensive and the level of staffing helps to make sure young people are supervised well. Young people also very rarely go missing from the children's home, although a procedure to follow is in place should this happen.

The staff use a mixture of sanctions and rewards to encourage positive behaviour. Young people said the sanctions were fair. Any use of sanctions is fully recorded in a bound book which young people can add their signature to. However, accountability is weakened because the views of young people about use of each sanction are never recorded.

The record book indicates there have been no incidents of restraint since the previous inspection. However, an incident record showed that the staff had moved a young person four times during an episode of challenging behaviour. Such moving of a young person, albeit for acceptable reasons, amounts to reasonable physical intervention. As such this meets the definition of restraint, as defined in the national minimum standards, and must therefore be fully recorded in the bound restraint book. This will help to ensure full accountability if the staff have to move any young person in the future.

The Registered Manager and staff have conducted risk assessments on the hazards that may affect young people. These are recorded clearly and comprehensively and they help the staff to be clear about what they should do to further reduce the risk of harm.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Fire drills are conducted regularly and these are recorded clearly.

Recruitment procedures are weak. The registered persons do not always obtain a fresh check from the Criminal Records Bureau before permitting staff to work in the children's home. Where this does happen, there is no clear written explanation to account for it. In addition, not all the necessary information is in place before employment decisions are made.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive the individual support they need to develop positively. One young person felt so well-supported they said 'it's like my second home here' and a member of staff said 'it's like a big family here'. Young people receive support from a range of external agencies as well as from people within the trust.

Appropriate risk assessments are in place and these have been made personal to each young person. For example, each young person has an assessment of their road safety skills and young people receive further guidance if necessary. Several staff are deaf and all receive training in British Sign Language to levels one and two to help them communicate effectively with young people.

Educational outcomes are also positive. Young people who do not attend full-time education in the adjacent school, attend suitable alternative provision locally. This helps young people to gain positive educational and social benefits.

Young people also benefit from a wide range of activities, many of which are in the community where they can mix and make friends with other young people. For example, one young person said 'there's lots I like doing in my spare time and the staff help me'. However, one young person said that they would like more games equipment and this is something the registered persons are currently assessing. Young people are also fully supported to follow any religion they choose.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are supported to contribute their views about how the home is run and about their own care plans. A residential placement plan sets out the needs of each young person and how these are to be met. Broadly speaking these plans cover all the necessary issues although the emotional needs of young people are not clear.

The Registered Manager and staff update the residential placement plans at least every six weeks and more often if issues arise. They involve each young person in setting measurable targets. Young people are always invited to attend their statutory looked after children reviews. However, the outcomes of these reviews are not always recorded in each young person's file. This makes it harder for the staff to be fully informed about each young person's progress and about the plans for their future.

The arrangements to help young people to maintain contact with their family and friends are very good. For example, one young person said 'I can contact my parent on the phone' and another said 'my friends and family can visit me here and I can visit them'. The children's home also provides significant support and resources to enable young people to go home to their families regularly, including weekends and

school holidays.

There are clear procedures to follow before any young person is admitted to the children's home. The Registered Manager visits each young person and their family at their home and makes an initial assessment. Each young person is then invited to visit the children's home and school to see what they are like. They are also invited to stay at the children's home for two days while a second assessment is carried out. The outcomes of these assessments are not always available in the young person's file. There is also no written summary confirming that the needs of any incoming young person and the needs of the current residents are compatible. The staff are therefore less well-informed about the incoming young person and there is less assurance that admission procedures are robust.

The Registered Manager and staff fully support young people to have a say in the running of the home and about their own care plans. They operate a key worker system and all young people have regular one-to-one time with their key worker and with the other staff members. Young people's meetings are held once a month and their views are recorded. However, any outcomes or necessary actions arising from the meeting are not always clear.

The Registered Manager regularly seeks the views of parents about the quality of care provided in the children's home. For example, parents are sent a questionnaire asking them to score 15 different aspects of care and to add any comments. The scoring enables the Registered Manager to measure any changes in quality over time. However, the questionnaire does not include the issues recommended by the national minimum standard and consequently important feedback from parents is being missed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager and staff help young people of all ages to gain useful knowledge and skills which will be helpful when they are older and potentially living independently. All young people have a living skills programme which is appropriate for their age and stage of development. An external agency has helped to advise on the structure of this programme which covers issues such as laundry skills, budgeting money and shopping skills, development of traffic awareness skills and personal hygiene.

Young people are also fully supported to be involved in activities in the community such as scouts and youth clubs.

The house is homely and comfortable. It has recently been redecorated, the bathrooms and bedrooms have been refurbished and new flooring has been laid. Suitable colour and lighting have been chosen for the bedrooms of young people with specialist needs.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Positive aspects associated with organisational issues are let down by significant areas of weakness in others.

The contents of the Statement of Purpose do not meet the requirements of legislation. Important information about training, cultural activities, consultation with young people and reviews of care plans is absent. The age range of young people who may be admitted differs from that mentioned in the conditions of registration. Additionally the Statement of Purpose does not describe the staffing policy. As a result important information which is required by legislation and which is useful to other people is not available.

Young people receive a children's guide about the home. This is written in a user-friendly format although it does not inform young people about how they can access an independent advocate.

The staff all have a job description but there is no person specification for the post of care worker. This means that anyone considering applying to work at the home is likely to be unsure about the personal attributes necessary for the type of work.

The registered persons provide good training for staff at all levels. New staff undertake induction training to the standards of the Children's Workforce Development Council. Most of the staff are qualified at level 3 in the National Vocational Qualification in Care. Training is also provided in specialist subjects related to health and behaviour.

Staffing levels are also good. For example, one young person said 'there are always enough staff on duty. There are always two members of staff and sometimes three'. However, records of employment do not show any reference to a probationary period although the staff understand this to be six months.

Young people benefit from consistency of relationships with the staff. The Registered Manager ensures that the use of agency staff is kept to a minimum and that experienced staff from other parts of the organisation fill in for shortages. Male and female staff work at the home and this is appropriate for the mixed gender of young people living there.

An external person makes unannounced visits to the children's home once a month to monitor the quality of care. Such monitoring considers all the relevant issues and makes recommendations as necessary.

The Registered Manager also monitors a wider range of issues once a month. However, this monitoring is not robust as it does not consider all the necessary issues and it does not routinely include the views of young people, parents and placing authorities. In addition, no clear action plan emerges so it is harder to be

assured that the monitoring will lead to improvement in the quality of care.

Children's records are stored securely and young people confirmed that they are able to read what the staff write about them (where appropriate) and that they could add their own written comments if they wanted to.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All the staff have received training in equality and diversity and young people are taught to respect one another and to be non-judgemental about others. Interpreting services are provided in statutory reviews and in educational reviews. Consequently, young people are fully supported to participate in the planning and reviewing of their own care. Young people are fully supported to follow the religion of their choice and to eat food that is relevant to their culture. The turnover of staff is low and this, along with the high quality of relationships between the staff and young people, helps to ensure that young people feel secure and valued.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
20	notify Ofsted of any significant events (Regulation 30)	05/11/2010
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose and ensure all the relevant details required by national minimum standard 22 and this regulation are recorded (Regulation 17(4))	28/10/2010
17	ensure that the written policy regarding disciplinary matters provides 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 (Regulation 27(2)(b))	01/11/2010
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to any person working at the children's home. Specifically this is in relation to the information described in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26)	28/10/2010
27	ensure that before any person is employed at the children's home, an up to date enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau check has been received (Regulation 26(6))	28/10/2010
29	ensure that all permanent appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation (Regulation	28/10/2010

	27(1))	
1	ensure that the Statement of Purpose describes all those issues required by Schedule 1 (Regulation 4)	03/01/2011
33	establish and maintain a system for monitoring all of the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1)(a))	01/11/2010
33	take into account the views of young people, parents and placing authorities when undertaking the monthly monitoring of care. (Regulation 34(3))	01/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that only the staff (not children) are able to open the doors to bathrooms, showers and toilets from the outside in case of emergency (NMS 25.6)
- ensure that when disciplinary measures are used, children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews are recorded on the child's file (NMS 3.4)
- ensure that when a child is admitted to the children's home, both the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents are recorded in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure the opinions and views of the parents of children at the home are ascertained regarding those issues described in the standard (NMS 8.6)
- ensure that the children's guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 1.3)
- ensure all staff have received written person specifications (NMS 28.6)
- describe the home's staffing policy in the Statement of Purpose. (NMS 30.2)