

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC035247
Inspection date	14/10/2010
Inspector	Dennis Bradley
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	19/01/2010
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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 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 provides short-break care and accommodation for children with a disability and sensory impairments from 9 years old up to 17 years old.

The home is a large two-storey dwelling set in its own grounds. There is a lounge with a television and DVD player, a dining room, an activities room, a large soft play area, a sensory room and a large enclosed garden with outdoor play equipment. The home has its own minibus equipped to transport children who use a wheelchair.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this full inspection all the key national minimum standards were inspected. There is evidence of positive relationships between the staff and young people who use the service. There are good arrangements for protecting and promoting the health of the young people. However, the home does not obtain appropriate consent for staff to administer first aid to young people. The home provides a safe setting for the young people but the complaints procedure does not include all the recommended information and staff have not had training in how to counter bullying. Staff are good at consulting young people and involving them in decisions about their stay at the home. Staff support the education and achievement of the young people and the young people are able to participate in a range of activities and outings. The opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training are good but the recording of staff training is not satisfactory. Staffing levels are good and provide staff with opportunities to carry out one to one work with the young people to help meet their assessed needs. The individual needs of young people are recognised and there are appropriate plans in place to address them. There are appropriate arrangements for monitoring the service and the care of the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, it was recommended that, at the earliest opportunity, the home should put in place a complaints procedure that is accessible to disabled children. This recommendation has not been addressed and is repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people benefit from being cared for by staff who promote their health and well-being. Staff encourage the young people to have a healthy diet and they are given choices regarding the food they eat. Staff are very aware of the different dietary needs of the young people. Currently care staff are preparing meals in the absence of a cook. Although the menus are basic, the meals are wholesome.

Staff are good at monitoring and meeting the diverse health care needs of the young people. The young people's care plans clearly set out their health care needs and what staff need to do to meet them. Staff have a good understanding of a range of health care needs. Many also have received more specialised training in meeting the specific health care needs of some young people.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication. These help protect their health and meet their health care needs. There are suitable records and procedures covering the administration of medicines for this purpose. Only those staff who have had appropriate training can administer medication to the young people. Staffing arrangements ensure appropriate support is available for the young people at all times. For example, there is always a person on duty trained in first aid, should a young person have an accident. However, the home does not obtain written consent for staff to administer first aid to young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff promote young people's privacy. This is evident when they support and assist young people with their personal care. Staff also respect young people's preferences regarding their personal care. They make sure information about young people is handled confidentially and stored securely. There are policies and procedures in place to help ensure this happens.

There are procedures for managing complaints appropriately and ensuring young people and their families are listened to. Staff try to make sure the young people and their families are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints or concerns. However, the complaints procedure does not include information about how to contact Ofsted. The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection but it has received a number of written compliments.

The home has appropriate procedures for safeguarding young people from abuse. All of the staff have had child protection training. This helps staff protect young people from abuse and ensure they respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

The young people benefit from being looked after by a team of staff who create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. The home has a clear anti-bullying policy and risk assessment and has recently achieved anti-bullying accreditation. Staffing levels and the vigilance of staff help make sure that any bullying behaviour would be dealt with promptly. Staff try to help the young people to develop an understanding of each others diverse needs and the importance of tolerance. However, staff have not received training in how to counter bullying.

There have been no incidents involving young people going missing. This is due to the levels of supervision staff provide as well as young people being unable to leave the premises without being accompanied by an adult.

Staff are good at encouraging and supporting the young people to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. They give positive messages to young people to reinforce acceptable behaviour. Staff make sure any challenging behaviour is handled appropriately and they rarely use sanctions. When they do these are relevant and reasonable. All of the staff have had relevant training and this covers how to reduce or avoid the need to use physical intervention.

There are satisfactory systems in place to keep the young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. For example, staff take part in regular fire drills. They also carry out a range of risk assessments, including individual risk assessments for each young person. These help identify what can be done to reduce or avoid risks where practicable and appropriate. There are suitable arrangements for carrying out regular checks of equipment, such as fire alarms and electrical appliances.

Durham County Council takes appropriate action to help make sure the home only employs suitable people. It carries out a range of checks on new staff before they start working at the home. This includes a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. There are good arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the home. These help ensure that they do not have inappropriate access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The young people benefit from having clear care plans and risk assessments that are based on their individually assessed needs. Staff use communication systems to help some of the young people communicate their needs and wishes more effectively. Staffing levels provide good opportunities for young people to receive support and assistance to meet their individual needs and wishes. Staff are knowledgeable about the individual needs of the young people and the implications this has for their care.

The home values educational achievement and staff have very good links with the young people's schools. For example, staff regularly visit schools to keep up to date regarding each young person's progress and needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for making sure young people have comprehensive plans of care and for reviewing their care and progress. These include holding regular statutory reviews. Where appropriate, staff support the young people to contribute to their reviews. There is good communication between staff and the young people's families. This helps keep staff up to date about any changes regarding the care and support of the young people.

Staff ensure young people are able to commence using the service in a planned and sensitive manner. This includes carrying out an assessment of each young person's individual needs to make sure the home can meet them. Staff take account of the individual needs and wishes of each young person when arranging introductions to the home. They also work closely with parents and social workers to ensure each young person has an appropriate care plan and risk assessment in place before they start using the service.

Staff are committed to involving the young people in making appropriate decisions about their stay at the home. For example, what outings or activities they would like to take part in and their preferences regarding how staff provide personal care. Staff take the views and opinions of the young people seriously and where possible and appropriate act upon them. They use communication systems and pictorial choice boards for those young people who cannot communicate verbally. There are also good arrangements for consulting parents and carers about the care of their children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

It is not the responsibility of the home to prepare children for independence and adulthood. However, staff have good working relationships with adult services to help make sure appropriate plans are in place for the future of older children.

The young people benefit from accommodation that is decorated and maintained to a good standard and meets their individual needs. For example, each young person has a single bedroom to help ensure their privacy. Staff consulted the young people regarding the décor for each of these rooms. The communal rooms are also decorated and furnished to create a pleasant and comfortable environment. The home has a range of aids and adaptations to provide for the physical needs of young people who have a disability.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that provides information about how it operates and meets the needs of young people receiving short stay care. The home is run in line with the Statement of Purpose. There are also information packs for parents and young people and the latter is in a format for those with limited language abilities. Staff also involved some of the young people in producing a DVD about life at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. For example, staff are keen to promote the rights of young people with disabilities and they welcome children and parents from different backgrounds. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people and try to make sure their individual needs are being met at all times.

There are suitable arrangements for providing staff with training in caring for children and young people. All but two of the care staff have a suitable qualification confirming they have the competencies needed to care for young people. The staff that do not are applying to enrol on a relevant course of training. Staff can access a rolling programme of core training, such as child protection and first aid, as well as training covering some of the young people's special needs and conditions. However, the home does not keep an appropriate record of each member of staff's training. There is an appropriate induction programme for newly appointed staff.

Staffing levels are good and provide staff with opportunities to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. Whenever it is possible there is a mix of male and female staff on duty. The handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is good communication within the staff team and good on-call arrangements help make sure staff feel well supported. The majority of staff are very experienced and there is low staff turnover which helps provide continuity and consistency for the young people.

The Registered Manager has a good system for monitoring records and the operation of the home and is able to identify any issues concerning the care and welfare of the young people that require addressing. It also helps make sure young people's case files are properly kept and that records of their needs, development and progress reflect each young person's individuality.

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
16	update the home's complaints procedures to include the name, address and telephone number of Ofsted. (Regulation 24 (4)(a))	18/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the complaints procedure is accessible to disabled children in a suitable form (NMS 16.3)
- obtain and retain on file, appropriate written permission for the administration of first aid (NMS 13.4)
- ensure staff receive training in awareness of, and effective strategies to counter bullying (NMS 18.2)
- ensure a written record of all training for all staff is maintained in the home. (NMS 31.4)