

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035380
Inspector	Nicholas Murphy
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Dawn Theresa Coyle
Date of last inspection	06/01/2014

Inspection date	07/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	there has been no enforcement action since the last inspection

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides a good standard of care for children who have short breaks. Some aspects of practice are outstanding, for example, the emphasis the home gives to consulting with and involving children. Another feature worthy of note is the quality of the environment which is welcoming and provides all the specialist facilities necessary for children with complex needs. Care plans are generally good, although some have not been updated as often as required. As a result of the committed and dedicated work of staff, children love coming here and achieve good outcomes.

Children get on well with staff and enjoy close and trusting relationships with them. This contributes to the feeling of safety which all children experience. Relationships between children are also good. Careful planning of which children stay at any one time means that they are compatible with each other and make firm friendships.

Management of the home is sound. A number of new staff have recently been recruited and some children took part in the selection process. There are some areas which need further development, including planning around behaviour management. However, recent innovations in practice demonstrate that the home has good capacity to make further improvement.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to six young people who have learning disabilities. It is operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2014	Interim	good progress
26/09/2013	Full	adequate
03/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
05/10/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities. Specifically, that individual children's plans identify the appropriateness of using sanctions as a means of managing their behaviour (NMS 3.6)
- ensure that the child's placement plan sets out any specific strategies that have been agreed to reduce the incidence of any negative behaviour (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.88)
- ensure that staff are trained in appropriate safe-care practice. Specifically, that all staff, including those employed in a support capacity, receive training on safe-care practice within a reasonable time of taking up their posts. (NMS 4.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children look forward to their stays here. They meet their friends and spend time with staff who they like and trust. One child said, 'I like it here, the staff are helpful and kind. I would give the home 10 out of 10.' Children feel that they are in familiar surroundings which provide them with emotional security. As a result, children make progress and achieve good outcomes. For example, there was concern about one child because of their poor physical development and failure to gain weight. Since attending the home for short breaks, the child no longer needs dietary or vitamin supplements and is thriving. The parent of another child said, 'My child used to need medication to sleep, they no longer need it now.'

At school, children benefit from the routine and predictability which staying at the home gives them. For some children, simply getting up in the morning in good time to get washed and dressed and have a good breakfast is significant. It means that children start the school day feeling comfortable, relaxed, and fully prepared to learn and take part in the life of the school. One parent said, 'My child really benefits from the calmness, the structure, and the predictability they experience here.'

Children develop an appreciation of living in a community and contributing to it. For example, one child assists a member of staff in going round the home in the morning opening the blinds. Another washes up the breakfast dishes for the whole group.

Children make good progress in acquiring self-care skills. Even children with very complex needs and disabilities improve their ability to do things for themselves. For example, one child's developmental target was to use cutlery when they eat. With support and guidance from staff, they are now able to do this; mastering this basic skill has given them greater independence. Another child, who is severely physically disabled, needs a lot of help to get dressed. However, the child has developed the ability to assist carers by rolling over when requested. This means that they can contribute to the task in a way that enhances their personal dignity and self-esteem.

Quality of care **good**

Children have good relationships with staff and with each other. Staff are aware of the importance of touch, particularly with those children who have communication difficulties. Children who do not use speech make their happiness with the staff evident in other ways. For example, one child shows their delight in receiving the attention of staff with thumbs-up gestures and high-fives. The overall commitment of the staff to provide the best possible care is evident in all areas of their practice. A parent said, 'The staff here go above and beyond. I can't think of anything they could

do which would improve the service they provide.'

The emphasis which staff give not only to seeking the views of children but also to acting on them is highly commendable. There is a post box which children can use to communicate any suggestions, grumbles or complaints. The Registered Manager responds to each one and records what action has been taken. Examples of suggestions include: 'I would like to go to Pizza Hut'; 'I would like some more books by my favourite author'; and 'How about a new cricket bat for the garden?' Even when it is not possible to respond to a particular request, the Registered Manager takes the time and trouble to explain to the child the reason why not. Children's meetings are also held regularly and are planned so that no child who attends for short breaks misses the opportunity to take part. There are also recorded discussions about specific events and outings, for example what Christmas pantomime the children want to see. Staff engage children in discussions to raise their awareness of different cultures, for example about French food or what is meant by halal meat. Additionally, children are involved in the recruitment of new staff and their views about the suitability of candidates are given real weight. In these ways, children are able to voice their opinions and make important choices, whatever their level of need or disability.

Children who commence a programme of short breaks are introduced carefully. Thorough assessment of pre-admission information followed by visits to the child's home enable staff to allocate the child to the group with which they would be most compatible. Each child has a key worker whose role is to draw up the placement plan and oversee its operation. Summaries of progress are used to assess where further work needs to be done to achieve improved outcomes. These plans are linked to the risk assessment for each child and include individual development targets. Although plans are reasonably comprehensive, they do not always address all areas of the child's life and not all are updated at the intervals required by the home's own policy.

The home provides a healthy environment for children. The arrangements for medication are meticulously planned and implemented. Food provided by the home is ample, varied, and of excellent quality. Children are welcomed in from school with jugs of juice and attractively presented raw vegetables and dips. One child said, 'The food is very nice.' Staff liaise with health professionals to ensure that treatment programmes and medication are appropriate. They also have good links with schools; one member of staff, an ex-teacher, has particular responsibility for this area. Effective inter-agency working helps to ensure that each child's needs are met across all the services that they access.

The home has the space and the resources to provide a wide range of activities to keep children busy and to stimulate them. There is a sensory room which children who have specific needs find particularly comforting and enjoyable. Another room is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment including a large touch screen which is adapted to suit all children, including those who use wheelchairs. An annexe to the main building houses a large soft play area and a home cinema, complete with

popcorn. In addition, children are supported to use facilities in the community, including youth clubs and leisure centres, and they go on outings, for example for a pub meal. This ensures that children are included and have access to the same opportunities as their peers. It also gives them experiences which some parents would not feel confident to provide themselves.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children have a strong sense of feeling safe at this home. This derives from the quality of the relationships between staff and children and the trust that children place in staff. One child said, 'I talk to [names of two staff members] about things that make me upset and this makes me feel much better.' Another said, 'If I have a problem I know I can talk to any of the staff.' The open and welcoming nature of the home also contributes to the culture of safety. One parent described the staff as being 'always very approachable.' The attractive welcome pack which children receive when they first attend also contains information about who they can contact outside the home if they have any worries. If staff have any concerns about a child, perhaps in relation to an unexplained bruise, they are prompt in notifying the appropriate agencies. This ensures that even potential safeguarding issues arising outside the home are appropriately addressed.

The home has a well-embedded anti-bullying policy which is promoted effectively by staff and understood by children. Together with the high ratio of staff to children, this ensures that bullying is not an issue. The staffing levels are also effective in preventing any children from going missing and keeping them safe within the home.

Children vary in their ability to understand appropriate social behaviour but in general they behave well. Positive behaviour is promoted through the use of rewards, with children eagerly anticipating the day when they achieve the prize of their choice. The behaviour management policy sets out the home's approach to the use of sanctions, which are used sparingly. However, it is not clear in individual plans whether or not the use of sanctions might be effective or appropriate for a particular child; for example if their understanding is so limited that a sanction would have no impact. Also, there is little planning for individual children about what might trigger challenging behaviour and what strategies staff could use to manage it. These shortfalls limit the potential of staff to be more effective in addressing unwanted behaviour.

A number of new staff have recently been appointed, following a rigorous recruitment and vetting process. The involvement of children in staff selection provides an additional level of assurance that the people employed by the home are suitable.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager, who was registered in 2007, and is suitably qualified and experienced. She provides clear and visible leadership to her staff team and effectively promotes the ethos and culture of the home. There have been a number of innovations since the last inspection. For example, there are no longer separate night care staff; all staff now take turns in supervising children through the night. This provides more consistent 24-hour care with all staff having the same levels of skills and qualification.

Monitoring of the home's operation and performance is sound. External independent monthly visits scrutinise all of the required areas and provide good quality reports to the Registered Manager and the provider. The Registered Manager's own monitoring makes particularly good use of feedback from young people. These two tiers of oversight help to flag up any weaknesses and drive improvement. In addition, a case file audit system has recently been introduced. Although still a work in progress, it has begun to enable shortfalls in the content and quality of children's records to be identified and rectified.

The staff group is sufficient in number to provide consistent care and support to children. As a result, even children with the most complex needs receive the appropriate level of staff supervision; in some cases one-to-one. New staff complete the required induction programme and enrol on qualification programmes within the necessary timescales. All other staff are qualified. There is a well-organised staff training programme which ensures that essential skills are refreshed at the appropriate intervals. However, some support staff have not received training in safeguarding within a reasonable time of their appointment. This means that they may not know how to respond appropriately to a child who comes to them with a concern.

The home's management uses feedback from service users, such as parents, to make improvements. This includes lessons learned as a result of complaints. For example, the staff handover procedure has been revised to ensure that information is passed accurately from one shift to the next. The effectiveness of this procedure has been kept under review and several additional modifications made. This kind of practice illustrates the home's receptiveness to change in order to improve its quality of care.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.