

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	16/01/2013
Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/09/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a children's home operated by a local authority. The service offers short-term care breaks for up to four children and young people with physical disabilities, young people with learning disabilities and young people with sensory impairment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory progress**.

At the last full inspection, the home was judged as outstanding. The children's home has maintained a high quality of care between inspections and this continues to secure positive outcomes for children and young people. Some young people successfully moved to adult services in line with their transition plans. These young people acquired lots of useful skills to facilitate their move. Another successful transition saw staff and management support plans to access a special residential school. The home provides a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to children and young people developing their potential.

Progress in some areas of the service was not as clear. It is evident that young people gain tremendous value from their time spent at the service, however, staff inputs are not always being captured within learning and achievement logs. Targets are being set for the children and young people but the activities being undertaken to improve and develop skills and support potential are not clearly recorded. A new system is being piloted at the home to introduce a formal 'gateway award'. This is planned through partnership arrangements with a charity and a local secondary

school. This will support, not replace, learning and achievement logs.

There will be some changes to the service as a result of an on-going review of residential services for children with a disability. The home's Registered Manager will temporarily leave her post to support consultation work linked to the review. A new manager will need to be appointed and registered with Ofsted prior to this period of absence.

The two recommendations set at the last inspection have been addressed in full and this led to further improvements to the home's operational systems. Staff have increased their knowledge on the inspection framework, grade descriptors and evaluation schedule and this is better reflected in practice. Full records are now held on the casual staff member who works at the home and these show robust recruitment procedures are being followed for all levels of staff.

The primary aim of the service, to provide short breaks, is managed very well. Three young people accessing short breaks confirmed that they, 'really enjoyed their time at the home and do lots of interesting things.' Young people benefit from consistent practice that allows their lives to improve considerably. Programmes run by key workers positively support young people's development. It is clear that individuals prosper in the home's friendly and caring environment. Young people spend their time doing constructive and stimulating activities. All activities are agreed and subject to risk assessments and this affords them opportunities to safely test out their skills in a variety of situations and environments. Young people's participation in the community continues to grow.

Young people have strong and trusting relationships with staff. Communication and consultation between staff, parents and schools remains highly effective. The views of the young people, staff, family members and partners are fully captured. There are many comments that show high levels of satisfaction with the home's operation, management, young people's welfare and the response taken to health and safety.

This inspection coincided with a recent incident. This will lead to a notification of a significant event being forwarded to Ofsted. The notification links to a possible safeguarding matter and this is being investigated following concerns raised by a parent. The home's Registered Manager is keeping accurate records and will inform Ofsted when the full outcome is known. The response taken is in line with local safeguarding procedures.

This home remains stable. The ethos and culture at the home clearly places children at the forefront of practice. Managers use their skills and experience to stimulate the enthusiasm of staff and channel their efforts effectively. Young people continue to receive a high standard of care delivered by an experienced staff team. Staff, including night staff and casual staff members, hold relevant qualifications. Some staff have higher level qualifications. Good information, including policy and procedural guidance, is available to support staff's practice. On-going training is being provided to ensure staff at all levels continually develop their skills sets.

The service is regularly monitored through both internal and external measures. Reports produced provide a clear snapshot in time of what it is like to experience short breaks at the home. The Registered Manager uses the available information to support continuous improvement. New ideas and initiatives are also introduced as a result of consultation processes. Everyone connected with the service is contributing to controlling the home's activities and this adds value to the quality of the services being provided.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure clear arrangements are in place to ensure appropriate management of the home when the registered Manager is absent; specifically, register a second manager for the service with Ofsted prior to the existing manager taking up any temporary appointment on behalf of the local authority (NMS 21.5)
- establish accurate records to show exactly how children's personalised care and targets are being addressed in promoting all aspects of their individual identity. (NMS 2.1)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.