

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Karen Forster
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 service provides care for young people with a learning disability in two units, one providing long term care for up to four young people with varying degrees of learning disabilities. The second unit provides shared care support for up to four young people with varying degrees of learning disabilities. Both units have lounge and dining facilities, with access to the outdoor areas.

The home is situated in a cul-de-sac position, within a residential area, close to a retail and residential town development. The service enjoys reasonable access to public transport, as well as health and leisure facilities.

There were six young people present in the home during the visit, who all contributed to the inspection, according to their needs.

Summary

This visit is an unannounced full inspection including all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas, plus an additional area of organisation. Whilst the service provides satisfactorily for young people's outcomes, shortfalls within various outcome areas impede the quality of care provided to individuals. There are some strengths within the provision, which includes the interest that both care staff and management show towards the welfare of the young people. However, the various shortfalls in care practice and administrative mechanisms, means that the care received by young people is satisfactory.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection raised three actions and one recommendation. The specialist bath unit has now been assessed by an engineer, the resulting report requires substantial remedial work which has yet to be completed. The hot water supply to the home is now fully operational. The third action regarding the crossover of transitional planning information from school to the home, is yet to be addressed and therefore is reissued at this inspection.

A recommendation regarding the home's lack of information regarding adult safeguarding protocols, was made at the last inspection to inform the care of the young people aged over 18. This issue has yet to be addressed, and therefore is reissued at this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people enjoy a well balanced and varied menu during their stay in the home. Individual food preferences and any personal allergies are well recorded and followed by catering staff. This means that tasty food is suitably prepared and well presented, in line with any special dietary needs of individuals. Clean, well maintained specialist eating aids are provided wherever required. Young people with support needs at meal times receive sensitive and discrete help at appropriate levels. There are two kitchen areas within the home which are well maintained, however, there is no evidence of a food safety assessment by the local Environmental Health

Department. This makes it unclear if the arrangements within the home meet the food safety standards.

Young people's current health care needs along with strategies to address the same are outlined in basic health care plans for young people using the service. Care staff are aware of young people's presenting needs relating to either clinical, dental, ophthalmic or psychiatric fields. This helps young people to receive the treatment they require, with suitable staff support. There are details of medical histories for young people, however, isolated records for some looked after children do not include parental consent for staff to arrange medical treatment.

Medication storage and administration within the home meets the standards. The service provides a secure cabinet for drugs provided within prescribed containers by the young people's families, or direct from the pharmacy. Medication administration records are very clearly maintained by two staff at each administration. This means that young people are offered medication in line with their medical prescription, and staff on subsequent shifts know when medication has been offered and administered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home's personal care procedures promote the privacy and safety of young people. Staff are careful to respect young people's privacy when supporting individuals to complete continence programmes, which are discreetly completed within the group. Personal data relating to young people is stored securely in line with internal policy and the standards.

The home maintains a satisfactory procedure for the collection of compliments and complaints from service users and their representatives. A recent survey programme by the authority to collect stakeholder views, has provided some intelligence to inform the home's quality assurance programme.

Children's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, with young people's welfare a priority. Staff confirmed that they are aware of their responsibilities within the home's child protection procedures. However, some staff work with young people over the age of 18, and do not have access to the local authority's adult protection procedures or national adult safeguarding good practice guidance. This means that staff are not aware of the process for adult protection referrals or disclosures.

There is an anti-bullying policy maintained within the service, where a zero tolerance approach is included. A central bullying record within the home indicates that there is no issue of bullying for young people within the service. The home's approach to bullying is not detailed within the service's statement of purpose as required by the standards.

The home's protocol regarding young people going missing from care suitably reflects the dependency levels of the service users. Staff members are clear regarding permissible measures to use in an attempt to stop young people leaving the home without authority. The home's policy is clear, meets the standards and staff are familiar with the content. This means that any episodes of missing young people would be followed up with suitable responses, reflective of the gravity of the situation.

Young people using the service are helped to appreciate when they present acceptable behaviour, through the use of meaningful positive rewards. This means that young people receive consequences that they value and which encourage the presentation of acceptable behaviour. The home's records of sanctions and physical interventions are compiled within one volume, which makes it more difficult for senior staff to monitor the effectiveness of control measures.

The home's policy regarding physical intervention meets the standards and most staff have received instruction in the safe control of challenging behaviours. This means that on some shifts staff are operational without suitable training in this area. The preferred model of physical intervention includes de-escalation and only uses restraint as a last resort, which meets the standards and helps to keep young people safe. However, the recording of restraints within the home falls below the standards. The accounts of restraints do not consistently include the duration of the physical intervention as required.

The home mostly ensures that the environment young people live in is safe and free of hazards. The home's specialist bath has now been assessed by an engineer, as required at the last inspection. However, the list of remedial work has not been addressed by the provider, including an identified hazard with the electrical switch for the bath unit. The home's checks on utilities within the home, including gas and electrical supplies, do not meet the standards in relation to frequency. The home's fire safety measures include a suitable fire safety risk assessment.

The home's evidence of clearance checks for staff is not fully compliant with Schedule 2 to the Regulations. Whilst internal care staff have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau clearance; including a check against the Protection of Children Act list (POCA). The Mencap staff deployed to work with the oldest group of young people in the home, have only been checked against the Protection of Vulnerable Adults list (POVA). The latter check is not sufficient to allow those staff unsupervised access to young people under the age of 18. The home's records relating to the internal care staff do not consistently include proof of the employee's identity or a full account of each individual's employment history.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive a personalised care service which is suitable to their needs, and promotes their abilities. Staff work hard to address the care objectives outlined within the personal profiles, by maintaining a continuity of care and consistent relationships with the young people and their family members. This means that changes in presented needs are consistently passed onto the home's staff from families, to enable a satisfactory level of care to be provided to individuals.

Although staff within the home work reasonably well with professionals from within the respective school networks, there is little documentary evidence of personal educational planning for those looked after young people. Recent staffing restrictions have impacted on the availability of key staff to attend school parent evenings, reducing the level of contact between the home and school. There is evidence of communication systems within the home, that use symbols and mirror the system used in school. This means that young people receive consistent support and tools to communicate with their peers and carers, both in and outside school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The strengths and needs of the young people living in the home and using the short stay service are satisfactorily assessed, and their medium and short term care objectives are included within personal profile documents. Although detailed, these internal placement plans lack information regarding the young people's cultural needs. This means that care can be provided that matches some of the individual needs of young people.

The care of individuals is independently reviewed, with a reasonable level of involvement from young people and the presence of all relevant parties. Although service users, commissioners and providers are mostly clear regarding the aims of the short stay programme, it is not always easy to recognise how the residential element contributes towards the overall package of care. This is due to two separate review systems for some service users, where the authority maintains a 'child in need' review system and a 'short break' review programme. The decisions from each forum are not consistently shared across the programmes, reducing the clarity and consistency of young people's care plans.

Young people spend short periods within the service, maintaining close contact with their families throughout. This is evident by the home's log of telephone contact between both young people and key staff with family members, and the written accounts of communication between the service and home. This promotes a partnership culture of care provided by families and the service, where young people enjoy a consistent approach by all carers.

The young people's records include detailed pre-admission information, much of which is updated ready for each stay. For looked after children, relevant looked after child documentation is maintained within the home for reference, providing the home's staff with a wealth of relevant information to inform their safe care of individual young people.

The strategies within the home for consultation with young people are not well developed or consistently applied. A recent survey programme by the authority to collect stakeholder views, has provided some intelligence to inform the home's quality assurance programme. However, there is no evidence that this data has been used to improve the care within the home. There is little evidence of consultative strategies within the home, reducing the level of feedback from young people regarding their care experiences within the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people using the service are provided with opportunities to develop self help skills, which provides individuals with a foundation for their adult life. However, their personal profiles are not reflective of the transitional planning completed between young people and their families, their Connexions' advisor and their school. This means that for young people aged 14 or above their transitional planning data is not routinely shared with the service, making it difficult for staff to support young people's transitional programmes.

Single bedrooms are provided for young people, which are well personalised for each occupant. There is an easily accessible bathroom with a separate toilet on each unit, which meets the standards. The young people and staff have the use of communal areas that are domestic in style, and provide sufficient space for the group size. The heating and hot water systems within the shared care unit means that the heating is constantly on, even in the height of summer months. This means that the air temperature within the shared care unit is excessive, even

when natural ventilation; fans and air coolers are used in an effort to control the temperature. This is uncomfortable for young people, their carers and their visitors.

Due to the nature of the short stay service the resident group alters regularly, along with their needs for recreational space. The communal areas afford a satisfactory level of choice for recreation, including a lounge and a paved area equipped with outdoor furniture.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home provides a clearly written statement of purpose which mostly meets the requirements of Schedule 1 to the Regulations. However, the document does not refer to the service's approach to bullying as required. This means that most of the service's information is available for stakeholders and interested parties.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from the staff group's understanding and sensitive approach to their additional needs. Individuals are able to use mobility and continence aids discreetly and safely within the service, which helps them to be as independent as possible. The quality and detail of young people's personal profile documents are conducive to the personalisation of the living environment for young people, in relation to their interests and hobbies. However, the profile documents lack information regarding the cultural needs of young people, making it difficult for staff to arrange care that meets individual heritage needs.

The supervision programme for staff is below the standards in frequency and content. Although regular staff meetings allow for discussion regarding individual young people and their progress, the infrequency of most supervision sessions makes the tracking of development and learning for staff very difficult. This means that plans made at annual appraisals are not regularly reviewed or revisited, to ensure that staff actually receive the learning opportunities that they need. Therefore staff do not always complete identified training, reducing their ability to apply new skills when caring for the young people.

The establishment's staffing levels are suitable for the numbers of young people and their care needs.

The home provides a clear procedural guide for staff, which outlines the authority's policies regarding such issues as safeguarding, personal care, moving and handling and managing challenging behaviour. However, there are some gaps in the training received by staff within these areas. For example, not all staff have completed training in the management of challenging behaviour.

The level of care staff qualified with a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 is above the 80 per cent threshold specified within the standards. This means that the abilities of nearly all of the care staff have been verified by an independent body, against national competencies. Therefore the home provides a very good level of NVQ qualified staff. The service has secured copies of the national induction standards for care staff provided by the Children's Workforce Development Council. The lack of any newly appointed staff means there is no current evidence of the impact of this competence based programme.

The quality of care is monitored by senior staff within the home, and the resulting reports meet the requirements of Schedule 6 to the Regulations. However, these accounts of the quality of care practice do not include feedback from young people, their families or social workers as required in the standards.

The service maintains two well indexed files, that contain all of the young people's records as required by Schedule 3 to the Children's Home's Regulations 2001. This means that both current and historical personal record information is available within the home.

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

Standard	Action	Due date
10	ensure that the food safety arrangements within the home are reviewed by the local Environmental Health Department (Regulation 23)	1 September 2009
12	ensure that the records for all looked after children include parental signed consent to home staff arranging medical treatment (Regulation 20)	1 September 2009
22	ensure that all staff are trained in the positive management of challenging behaviour (Regulation 17)	1 September 2009
22	ensure that the home's records of physical intervention include all of the required details, especially the duration of the restraint (Regulation 17)	1 September 2009
26	ensure that the home's gas installation is checked by an engineer annually and records maintained of the same (Regulation 23)	1 September 2009
26	ensure that the home's electrical installation is checked by an engineer and records maintained of the same (Regulation 23)	1 September 2009
26	ensure that the remedial work in relation to the specialist bath unit required by the service engineer is completed, with particular attention to the engineer's report regarding the electrical switch for the unit (Regulation 23)	7 August 2009
27	ensure that staffing records include a full employment history for personnel within the home (Regulation 26)	1 September 2009
27	ensure that staffing records include proof of the employee's identity (Regulation 26)	1 September 2009

27	ensure that the Mencap staff deployed within the home have been subject to a POCA list check, with records of the same (Regulation 26(2))	31 July 2009
3	include the 'Child in Need' review decisions within young people's home records (Regulation 12)	1 September 2009
6	include details of young people's 14 plus transition plans within their personal records (Regulation 12)	1 September 2009
24	maintain a suitable air temperature within the shared care unit at all times (Regulation 31)	31 July 2009
28	provide supervision programmes for staff at a frequency in line with the standards. (Regulation 27)	1 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- review the use of a joint record for sanctions and physical interventions (NMS 22)
- secure copies of the local authority's adult protection procedures and the 'No Secrets ' guidance, for reference within the home (NMS 17)
- provide copies of each looked after child's personal education plan, within their home records (NMS 14)
- include full details of young people's cultural needs within their personal profile documents (NMS 2)
- review the current strategies for consultation with both long term care and short term care users (NMS 8)
- roll out the planned competence based induction programme for all newly appointed care staff (NMS 31)
- use feedback from young people, their families and social workers to inform the home's quality assurance programme, and evidence the same (NMS 33)
- ensure that the home's statement of purpose document includes details of the service's approach to bullying. (NMS 1)