

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC036186
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	5 March 2009
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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

The home is a children's respite service registered to a local authority and located near the centre of a town. It provides respite day and overnight care for up to eight boys and girls with learning and/or physical disabilities who are aged between five and 16 years of age.

There are eight single bedrooms with a lounge, play area, soft play area and dining room. There is an outdoor play area at the back of the property, a new playground at the side with various equipment; car parking is at the front.

The home is close to local shops and leisure facilities, and there is good access to public transport. There is a company minibus available.

A small number of children contributed to the inspection via written surveys with support from their parents and more contributed directly during the two visits.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection. The overall judgement is good. All areas of care are considered in this report taking into account that some apply less because of the respite nature of the service and the fact that parents remain the main carers. Issues of equality and diversity are addressed well and action has been undertaken to address the two recommendations of the last report regarding an element of staff training and the children's guide. The service is relatively complicated, dealing as it does with different groups of children most nights. Also, because of the complex needs of children themselves there is a high degree of communication between the home, schools and parents, with staff having to be alert to the needs of families as well as individual children. Shortfalls identified this time are minor. Work is necessary to improve the record of children's visits, the service plans for children and monitoring by key workers.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The safety and health of children has been improved by staff training to ensure that when skilled health tasks are carried out for children, these are only carried out on the written authorisation of the prescribing doctor or responsible nurse. The children's guide now shows children how to contact Ofsted if they wish to raise a complaint in this way.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a healthy range of home cooked meals that more than meet their dietary needs. Catering staff ensure that special diets are catered for as well as a range of individual preferences. This is particularly complicated because of the daily changes in children and their special needs. Mealtimes are well managed so that children obtain the greatest benefit from the occasions. Individual needs such as those arising from behaviour or physical disability are dealt with well. Other health needs are also identified and promoted in association with parents, who remain responsible for the health care of their children. It is critical to the welfare of

children that their medications are managed appropriately. There is an efficient and safe system in place to ensure that the needs of each new group of children are met. However, there are minor shortfalls in the storage of certain topical treatments that could lead to cross-infection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The welfare and protection of children is fully promoted both on and off site: parents consider that the care is 'fantastic', which is a credit to the staff group, given the complex needs of children. The privacy of children, for example, is respected well by the provision of individual bedrooms. Staff attempt to ensure that children use the same bedroom on each visit to help them feel more comfortable and all personal care issues are addressed discreetly. Children are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through careful analysis of their needs and the development of individual plans to help them. Any such behaviour management is carefully monitored to ensure it is appropriate. In practice, the home has a calm and positive atmosphere that encourages children to relax and have fun. Staff are also alert to issues such as bullying and of children going missing and these are addressed comprehensively. Most children are not able to make verbal complaints, but staff are familiar with their ways of raising concerns and systems are in place to manage complaints from other people. Social workers report that the home is particularly good at keeping them in touch with developments. Communication between the home, parents, school and other professionals is a critical feature of the care that is offered and it is undertaken effectively.

As well as the usual measures to ensure the safety of children, for example, from absconding and fire, the home also undertakes thorough checks and maintenance on the various pieces of equipment it has which children need, such as hoists. Recruitment of new staff is an important way of keeping the children safe too, and this is undertaken well.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive a high level of effective individual support at all times and support is also available to parents. It is achieved through high staffing levels and close attention to matching the individuals who attend for respite care at any one time. This helps to avoid bullying, for example and retains children's friendship groups, which is otherwise difficult for children with these disabilities. Such matching is a complex task that also has to take into account the equity of care packages provided to families. It constantly changes as the individual children and their needs alter, but it is critical in achieving the best outcomes. In order to support this process the overall occupancy level is usually kept lower than the registered number. Although this can mean a lower level of support to parents, they consider that the service they and their children receive is 'great' and enables them to relax and obtain crucial rest, which in turn, helps the long-term care of children.

Many parts of the care provided contribute to the overall education of children and the home liaises effectively with schools as well as parents. In particular, staff are successful at building children's confidence and self-esteem. The staff team constantly review the activities they offer to children, both on site and off site, and a new outdoor play area has recently been constructed. To some extent the routine at the home is necessarily different to that in children's own homes but the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and the majority of most children's

time is spent with their own families. Such benefits include attempting new tasks and meeting new people in a safe way.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

In most cases, children are known to the service for some time before they use it for overnight stays and substantial efforts are made to be as sensitive as possible to them and their families, for example, by staff undertaking home visits. Their needs are assessed effectively and written plans show how such needs will be met. Changes arising from multi-agency reviews, for example, are integrated into working practices. Staff are careful to also review each child's needs before each visit and plan the shifts accordingly for example, some children attend for day care after school and do not stop overnight, which can affect the activities they might undertake. There are however, some minor discrepancies between key workers regarding how often they check to ensure that documents such as service plans and individual risk assessments are up-to-date. Also, some service plans do not indicate whether measures are necessary to address children's cultural needs. A register of children accommodated is not in place although this has minimal impact of outcomes for children.

Children have good relationships with staff and are encouraged and supported to make decisions whilst they are in the home; there are various opportunities to do this. Also, an improvement has been made to the formal opportunities available to parents to visit and make comments or ask questions by the organisation of coffee mornings. In specific cases, parents receive regular written feedback about their children's activities which improves the continuity of care to children. Great efforts are made by staff to create a calm and supportive environment for children, whatever the difficulties arising on individual shifts.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The property is somewhat institutional in appearance but is well suited to its respite purpose. It is well maintained, colourfully decorated, clean and free from malodour. There is ample space and the communal areas can be adapted to meet the needs of the groups. Children have their own bedrooms that they use each time and which offer a high degree of privacy.

During the short periods they are in the home, children receive care that contributes significantly to their preparation for adulthood. The important transition from children to adult services is given the status it requires by the allocation of a transition worker. For example, if a young person is transferring to adult services, and where it is appropriate to meet the individual's needs, staff work shifts in the new unit, and vice versa. Outside the home, children are offered the chance to use money in shops as one way of learning financial and other skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of children to achieve greater equality, arising, for example, from their ages and disabilities, are given a high priority. A resource pack has been created for staff reference, and they are also receiving specialist training to help them further promote equality and diversity with children; this is good practice.

The service is well managed and organised with an effective management structure. All staff understand their responsibilities and there is effective delegation of tasks necessary for the efficient day-to-day operation of a busy service. New children receive a leaflet explaining the service and this is satisfactorily expanded upon verbally with children and in a Statement of Purpose for adults. The Statement of Purpose, however, does not clearly address all the required issues, especially the conditions of registration and emergency admissions, which are important facts for new families. Staff explain these matters over a period of time, and in ways that best suit the children. Records of such discussions, and other matters, are kept in appropriate, secure files for each child.

Staff are well supported via meetings and display a high level of professionalism whilst dealing with the complex needs of children. Of particular benefit to children is the low staff turnover and high percentage of staff who are qualified, which supports a consistent level of service. There are also a number of male staff in the team, which helps to address gender issues with children. Similarly, there is thorough training of staff and a clear system to ensure all staff training is up-to-date. The training also includes training on issues that are relevant to the special needs of children, such as moving and handling and intravenous feeding. The level of staffing is usually at least one-to-one and visiting professionals, such as social workers, agree this is a substantial attribute of the service.

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
5	ensure there is a register showing the required facts in respect of each child (Regulation 29.1, schedule 4(1))	13 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's placement plan, and related documents, are monitored by the key worker (NMS 2.2)
- ensure that the placement plan for each child, or equivalent document, sets out clearly the cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met (NMS 2.1)
- ensure the Statement of Purpose provides all the information required in Schedule 1 (NMS 1.2).