

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20 January 2010
Inspector	Lynda Mosling
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	16 July 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

This home is registered for a maximum of six young people between the ages of five and under 18 years. It is owned by a city council and provides short-term placements for young people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. It is situated on a busy main road with good links into the local city.

The home is a large, detached house that has been adapted over the years to provide ground floor accommodation for young people with complex needs. The home has a range of specialist equipment, including hoists and assisted baths. The first floor is used for offices and the staff bathroom.

Summary

This unannounced interim inspection was undertaken by one inspector during one afternoon/early evening. There were five young people being cared for at the time of the inspection and all were observed as part of the process.

This inspection is the second annual visit to the home, in line with regulatory requirements. The aim of the inspection is to report on the progress of the home following the key inspection in July 2009.

There are two outcome areas judged at this inspection and both are judged to be good. The areas not judged at this inspection were all judged as good at the key inspection. The overall judgement therefore remains good.

The home provides good care to young people, on a short term basis, with a range of complex needs. The young people present as happy and settled in the home and enjoy constant interaction with the staff. Staff are child centred and have an impressive knowledge of the young people's care needs.

Care is provided with sensitivity and ensures the young person's privacy and dignity is protected. Individual needs are well catered for.

The main areas requiring improvement are with regard to staff training and record keeping. One recommendation from the key inspection remains in place and one new recommendation is made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made as a result of the last key inspection. The first was with regard to training in complaint handling. This has now been undertaken by the manager and deputy manager and further training for staff is planned. The second was to provide all staff with refresher training in child protection. While this has not yet been actioned it has been identified as a need on the homes training request to the central training department. The third was to ensure there are suitable means for young people to make their wishes and

feelings known about the running of the home. A group has been set up of young people who use the service to help staff understand their feelings and communication needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is protected by the staff who ensure that all personal care is delivered in private and that confidential information is securely stored. Care plans highlight the individual needs of the young people and give guidance to staff on how to provide the necessary care sensitively.

The complaints procedure is thorough and includes informal and formal stages. There have been no complaints made since the last inspection but records show previous complaints have been handled appropriately. The managers have received recent training in complaint handling and there are plans to make this available to other staff. Parents are aware of the complaints procedure and how to use it on behalf of their children.

Staff receive training in child protection at their induction and are aware of the correct procedures to refer any issues of concern on to the appropriate team. They have requested refresher training regarding safeguarding young people with disabilities in their training plan for the coming year. Care plans identify any particular vulnerabilities with regard to young people harming themselves or others. This information is used when planning the respite arrangements for young people, particularly when a shared room is offered.

Young people in the home rarely target other young people and have little understanding of the notion of bullying. Where young people are known not to get on they are provided with a respite placement at different times. Staff are careful to monitor young people's behaviour so that others are not inadvertently harmed.

While there are clear procedures for dealing with incidents of young people going missing they have not been needed as no such incidents have occurred. The young people are closely monitored and, due to their disabilities, are accompanied when they go out of the building. Risk assessments clearly identify the risks to young people of going missing and the action necessary to keep them safe.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable way and are provided with opportunities to learn how to socialise positively. Staff are patient in their dealings with young people and remind them of appropriate behaviours. Sanctions are rarely used although sometimes young people are removed from the group, with staff, for brief periods to enable them to calm down. Staff are good at distracting young people and offering them alternative activities when their behaviour becomes inappropriate.

The home provides safe accommodation to the young people by ensuring any hazards are identified and dealt with promptly. There are good systems in place to check on health and fire safety and maintenance of equipment.

Recruitment procedures are designed to keep young people safe and all necessary checks are undertaken prior to staff having contact with them. The records are held in the human resources central office but the manager has access to the information to ensure the correct procedures are followed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people generally visit the home with their family prior to their first respite placement. This enables them to become familiar with the environment and the staff and helps lessen their anxiety. The Statement of Purpose accurately describes the service on offer and is made available to parents, placing authorities and other interested parties.

The staff present as confident and competent. Most have many years of experience of caring for young people with disabilities. A recent team day event has helped their development as a group and has benefited the service in terms of consistency of practice. Staff are observed to have warm and open relationships with the young people and show patience and sensitivity while caring for them. As a respite service the number of young people they care for over a 12 month period is large but they demonstrate an impressive knowledge of each young person's needs.

The manager and deputy manager are very involved in day to day discussions with the staff and are available on call during evenings and weekends. While most feel well supported by the line management arrangements some express frustration at the length of time it takes to put ideas into action.

Staff are encouraged to take up appropriate training and particularly value the practical training they receive from medical colleagues. Over 90% of the care staff have achieved the national Vocational Qualification in Care at Level 3.

There are sufficient staff on duty to provide good care to the young people placed. The assessment of care needs of individual young people are used to inform the manager of the staffing levels and he is responsive to their changing needs. While completing the rota is a challenge when there are periods of staff absences the records show that the ratio of staff to young people is generally good.

Monitoring arrangements by the provider ensure that the service meets the regulations and accepts appropriate placements. Reports are thorough and are seen as helpful by the manager.

Young people's files contain the relevant information needed to provide suitable care to them. While there are comprehensive records about the experience of each young person at every visit the information contained they are not consistently used to update the care plans or risk assessments. The files also do not all contain the minutes of reviews of the young people and are therefore not efficient at providing a clear and concise picture of their current needs.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff receive training in the prevention and recognition of abuse (including its recognition in non-verbal children) (NMS 17.8)
- ensure each child's file contains the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (NMS 35.2)