

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julia Toller
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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 is a local authority children's home, providing care and accommodation to four young people of either gender, with learning or physical disabilities. The home is close to the local town centre and transport links. This is a single storey building that is well equipped to meet the needs of the young people who use the service.

There is a large lounge, separate dining area, kitchen and single bedrooms with suitable aids and adaptations to meet the individual needs of young people. There is a bright and child friendly outdoor area that is fully secure providing a safe environment for young people to play.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service overall.

Young people and their families benefit from positive relationships with staff, they are afforded a range of facilities and opportunities to encourage and support a healthy lifestyle, to develop their life skills and enjoy socialising with other young people.

Staff benefit from a good level of training and support, they work well with other professionals to meet the complex and holistic needs of young people in areas such as emotional and physical wellbeing.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two actions regarding risk assessments associated with the administration of medications and physical interventions were made at the last inspection. One recommendation was made about the use of bed sides at the home.

Due to the health care needs of some young people, medications sometimes need to be administered in a covert fashion. Placement plans and risk assessment clearly outline the need for this procedure alongside written agreements and protocols for individual young people. This ensures that all professionals involved in the care of young people are fully aware of procedures being carried out at the home and safeguards young people.

Placement plans fully outline when it may be necessary to physically restrain young people and the suitable restraint methods that may be used. Records of these incidents are clearly documented alongside the nature of the restraint used.

Placement plans also highlight when bed sides may need to be used to minimise injury to young people, plans direct the reader to relevant risk assessments to safeguard young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Each young person has a health care plan as part of their placement plan, that clearly outlines their health care needs. These are monitored and updated on a regular basis to ensure that their needs are met. Staff liaise with parents and carers to maintain a record of all visits to health care professionals along with an outcome of the visit. As young people attend the service for 'short stays', this helps all staff to be aware of ongoing health issues for young people.

The home seeks parental consent for the administration of medications. All medicines are stored in a suitable locked cabinet with records completed as medication is administered to young people, this assists in safeguarding young people.

Due to the health care needs and behaviours of some young people, medications are at times administered in a covert fashion. Records demonstrate that this is a multi disciplinary decision and the steps that staff take to ensure young people are fully safeguarded in the process. However, the medication policy does not fully outline the practical steps that staff are taking to safeguard young people in this process.

Although young people are encouraged to follow a healthy diet, there are opportunities for young people to enjoy treats during their stay at the home. Where this is restricted due to the needs of young people, staff strive to develop the range of foods that young people will tolerate and enjoy. They collate information from a number of sources to gain a clear picture of foods that young people like, including details of how they want to have their foods served, and whether assistance is needed with eating. Individual methods of communication are used to allow young people to make choices about their food and plan menus.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are written behaviour management policies and procedures for young people, these place great emphasis on providing young people with continuity and structure in relation to behaviour management. This is reinforced by comprehensive placement plans that identify routines and care practices that are required to minimise distress to young people and therefore inappropriate behaviours.

Risk assessments are in place regarding young people's individual care needs and behaviours. This ensures that risks to young people are minimised by detailing practical guidance for staff to follow when involved in specific situations, for example, when carrying out personal care tasks. These are regularly reviewed and updated as and when necessary. Great care has been taken to use these to achieve positive outcomes for young people, for example, how staff should speak to young people to reduce their distress.

All staff have attended training in physical restraint; records are maintained appropriately and monitored as part of quality assurance systems at the home. Great emphasis is placed on staff acknowledging possible triggers to young people's behaviours. For example, where known fears are recorded, risk assessments clearly state the effects that these fears can have on an individual and ways to minimise distress.

There are clear written policies and procedures in place regarding bullying; these promote the welfare of children placed at the home. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities should bullying take place and they are able to give clear accounts of how this would be handled, if any issue arose.

All staff have attended safeguarding training; new staff as part of their induction programme and as a refresher for existing staff. This ensures that staff promote the safety and welfare of young people in line with local safeguarding procedures. Staff understand the behaviours of young people and how this knowledge can be used to safeguard them when they can not verbalise their feelings and emotions.

Although there are complaints recorded at the home these records are not always an accurate description of the steps taken to address and conclude complaints. Staff also use their knowledge of young people's behaviours to record when individuals are showing distress and whether this may be their way of showing that they are upset or unhappy about something.

The safety of young people and staff at the home has been promoted through the regular testing of fire safety equipment and staff training, minimising risks to young people and staff.

The recruitment and selection of staff is thorough and robust. This promotes the safety and welfare of young people cared for at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people have access to a good range of educational toys to aid their development and enjoyment. They also enjoy a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home.

For young people who cannot communicate verbally, staff complete a written report of activities that they have enjoyed. Staff meet with young people at the start of their stay to gain their views about what they would like to do during their stay or how they would like to spend their time.

There are detailed risk assessments in place for activities that young people take part in, this ensures that the safety of young people, staff and those in the community is promoted.

Staff at the home have developed effective links with schools, including information sharing to help young people achieve at school. Staff utilise these links to gain advice and guidance when necessary.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's care needs are assessed prior to their admission to the home to ensure that they can be cared for appropriately. Placement plans are developed and updated regularly. In addition, these plans alert the reader to other pertinent information, such as risk assessments, that they need to be aware of to care for young people appropriately.

Admissions to the home are planned, visits are planned in discussion with families and other professionals, at intervals appropriate to the needs of the individual. Staff at the home take time to ensure that the home is welcoming to young people and use the time to learn from parents and carers, in an effort to find ways of reducing the anxieties of young people.

Agreements are reached with families about contact that families may want during the young person's stay at the home, this helps families and young people to feel settled and secure.

Prior to reviews, staff complete a written report of the young person's welfare and any improvements or issues that need to be addressed at the home. The home has developed their own consultation documents that are child-friendly and provide young people with opportunities to have their say about anything they enjoy or are unhappy about. Staff use communication systems relevant to the individual to ensure that they can gain their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves suitable to their age, abilities and understanding and to learn skills for daily living. If possible, young people are also encouraged to develop their personal care, organisational and social skills. Staff play a significant role in planning for young people's futures as part of a multi disciplinary approach, to make sure that they receive suitable support and accommodation to meet their assessed needs.

Young people enjoy homely and comfortable accommodation. The home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Young people have personalised their bedrooms and they have enough personal space to meet their needs. There are suitable aids and adaptations to maximise the independence of young people and to allow staff to care for young people safely and effectively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The cultural and individual care needs of young people have been identified. Quality assurance systems are in place within the home, to ensure that these needs are promoted and met.

The Registered Manager of the home is no longer working at the home, the organisation have however put in place suitable temporary arrangements pending recruitment for the position.

The home provides a safe and stable environment for young people. The home is well run. The manager shows effective leadership and commitment to good child care, supporting staff well on a daily basis. In addition staff receive regular professional supervision, although there are some shortfalls in staff receiving this on a regular monthly basis. Staff develop their knowledge and skills through training relevant to the needs of the young people living at the home.

Young people and their families know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. The children's guide provides important information about the home, in a way that may be understood by young people. The home has a written statement for parents and social workers, which details how the home operates and how they will meet the needs of young people.

Young people are looked after by competent and enthusiastic people, who have suitable skills and experience to meet their needs. They provide positive adult role models for people living at the home. The staff team provides stability and continuity of care for young people, with staffing levels satisfactory to meet the needs of young people. These levels are adjusted to take into account any changes to the care needs of individuals or in response to concerns about young people's safety.

The provider and manager regularly monitor the running of the home and the quality of care. They take action to improve the service provided and make sure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare.

The home's written records provide a clear picture of young people's individual's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are well organised. They contain up to date information about young people, making sure that staff are aware of their needs and that they are caring for them appropriately.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
16	ensure that records of complaints hold full details of action taken in response to complaints (Reg 24).	16 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the medication policy holds full details of the practical steps being taken by staff when medications are administered in a covert fashion (NMS 13)
- ensure that all staff receive individual supervision on a monthly basis (NMS 28).