

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 an outdoor area that is fully secure providing a safe environment for young people to play.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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. However, there are some shortfalls around monitoring the home in line with Regulation 33 and staff vacancies.

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 well-being.

Improvements since the last inspection

One recommendation was made at the last inspection regarding fire safety training. This is now taking place which helps to make sure that staff and young people are made aware of the correct steps to take in the event of a fire.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have a health care plan that forms part of their placement plan. This clearly outlines their health care needs. The plans are monitored and updated on a regular basis to ensure that the health care needs of young people 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 breaks', this helps staff to keep up to date with the health issues for young people.

The home seeks parental consent for the administration of medications. Medications are stored in a suitable locked cabinet, and medication records are completed appropriately to demonstrate medications that young people have received during their stay. 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.

Young people are encouraged to follow a healthy diet, but there are also opportunities for young people to enjoy treats during their stay at the home. Staff strive to develop the range of foods that young people will tolerate and enjoy, offering 'tasters' in addition to their choice of meal. 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, the importance of routines and structures for some young people to help them feel safe and secure and reduce potential 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 are aware of their roles and responsibilities and 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 young people who cannot verbalise their feelings and emotions.

There is a record of complaints maintained at the home that shows the details of complaints, action taken to address the complaint and whether a successful outcome has been reached. 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, thus 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 and equipment 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. Staff complete detailed risk assessments about activities that young people take part in, ensuring 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 and in line with parental wishes. Placement plans are developed and updated regularly. These are detailed, comprehensive documents that are completed from the young person's perspective and outline how they wish to be cared for whilst staying at the home. In addition, the plans alert the reader to other pertinent information, such as risk assessments

and health care issues 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 they may want during the young person's stay at the home, or frequency of phone updates. This helps families and young people to feel settled and secure.

Prior to reviews, staff complete a written report regarding the young person and how they enjoy their stay at the home. They also refer to any goals that young people have achieved and any future goals that they are working towards. This may be in terms of independence or personal care tasks.

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 a variety of communication systems relevant to the individual to ensure that they can gain their views. In addition the organisation has employed a 'participation officer' who is working with staff at the home, developing communication systems to collate the views of young people. The home is also working with outside organisations to ensure that the voice and views of young people are heard.

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.

Since the last inspection Ofsted has completed their suitability checks on the proposed manager and he is now the Registered Manager of the home.

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 childcare, supporting staff well on a daily basis. In addition staff receive regular professional supervision on a 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.

There are some staff vacancies at the home at present that are being filled by staff working additional hours and regular agency staff. Whilst this is providing continuity for young people using the service, this is not a long term solution. The manager states that this is a short term issue and that the posts are due to be filled on a permanent basis.

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. However, copies of the Regulation 33 reports are not always forwarded to Ofsted.

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?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that copies of Regulation 33 reports are forwarded to Ofsted (NMS 32)
- ensure that there is adequate staff to meet the needs of young people, in particular ensure that staff vacancies are filled (NMS 30)
- ensure that there is a procedure and recording system for safety checks completed on bed sides. (NMS 26)