

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC039676
Inspection date	15/11/2010
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	02/03/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

The house is operated by a county council social services, children and families service. It offers short-term respite care breaks, for children who have severe learning or physical disabilities and significant communication difficulties. A maximum of 10 children can be accommodated at any one time. Their ages range from 5 years old up to 17 years old.

The home is purpose built. It is a single storey building on a site adjacent to a school for children with special educational needs. The home has been adapted to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities and provides specialist equipment, to help meet the needs of children accommodated.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection of the home against the key National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes. Parents' questionnaire responses showed them to be very satisfied with the service and confident that their children were kept safe while enjoying time with their peers. The overall judgement of the inspection is that the service continues to provide good care to children and that they enjoy positive outcomes from their short-break care experiences.

The service is very good at meeting the diversity of needs demonstrated by the group of children receiving short-break care. Staff know the children well and are able to adapt their approach to suit the individual. There is clear leadership and management and ongoing commitment to the development of services to children with individual needs. There is one recommendation made at this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection there were three recommendations made to improve good practice at the service. The Regulation 33 visitor monitors the sanctions and the information is recorded onto the monthly report.

A policy on the use of a piece of equipment that enable young people to be kept safe at night while asleep, has been developed.

All files looked at during the inspection had statutory review minutes in them.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff continue to promote the welfare of children and young people using the service by encouraging them to eat healthy food and enjoy activities that give them exercise and fresh air. There is appropriate guidance and training available to enable the safe handling of medication by staff during children's short-break stays. Parents expressed their satisfaction with these arrangements and the range of healthy food on offer at the service. Children attending the service at the time of inspection were happily engaged in constructive play while they waited for tea. They enjoyed a selection of food of their choosing for tea together with a good exchange of banter with staff before the evening activity programme began.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The service promotes the welfare of children and protects them well. Policy and procedure is underpinned by good practice and training. Children's individual needs are well noted and known to staff who provide individually tailored approaches to short-break care. Staff work together with parents and other professionals to protect children from harm and promote their well-being.

The main issues for the home revolve around the diversity of needs of the children using the service, their appropriate grouping and the management of behaviour while retaining an atmosphere of fun and learning throughout short-break stays. The service meets these challenges well through adaptive and reflective practice. Staff are experienced in caring for children's individual needs, they know the children and respond to their needs by using praise, reward schemes and encouragement.

Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with on an individual basis, usually with verbal reminders, and these were being recorded as sanctions. The number of sanctions recorded were high and recorded as being used frequently. However, on further inspection it was found that staff were challenging inappropriate behaviour rather than imposing a sanction. The manager was asked to consider the need to record, therefore, such actions as a sanction.

Safeguarding issues have been channelled appropriately as have complaints or concerns raised by parents. The physical environment in which the service operates is well maintained and there are good arrangements in place for the safe recruitment of staff through the central recruitment team and by the Registered Manager.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

As a short break service the main responsibility for education remains with parents and the local authority. This service supports children with their education by having them ready for school following a short-break stay and by attending individual education reviews. These reviews are usually followed by in house reviews all of which contribute to building and continuing an up-to-date assessment of needs for an individual child.

During the school holidays there is an emphasis on short-break stays being fun times using the full facilities of the service and the local leisure amenities. As such the outcomes for children at this inspection were that they enjoyed a variety of trips and outings arranged by staff, while children were very much part of the decision-making process about where to go.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's needs are based on those identified through a core assessment and then written up as a placement plan for individual children. There are in house reviews and education reviews but no children are considered to be children in care and subject to full statutory reviews. In house reviews are held with parents and recorded with any agreed actions being fed into updated care plans for the individual.

Child in need reviews are also held by the placing authority and the service is always invited to attend these. Children have plenty of opportunities to contribute their views on the running of the home and activities that take place. There have been a number of house meetings which young people were able to express their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children using the service adapt well to their time in the home. They are familiarised with the home through tea visits first before coming for an overnight stay. Parents state their children are pleased to have a short break in the service and happy while at the home. Stays are for minimal periods, there are only eight children at any time and a lot of time is spent out of the house.

When in the house there are plenty of age-appropriate games and toys to play with as well as outside activities such as the swings and soft-play areas in the garden. The new quiet area and sensory room have added to the facilities available to children and young people. Children and young people are encouraged to share staff

time and the facilities of the home throughout their stays. There is continuous reinforcement of positive behaviour and the principles of communal living.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation and leadership of the service is good with clear arrangements for deputising in the absence of the Registered Manager. Staff receive induction training as well as annual core training and refreshers. There are opportunities for developmental training and these issues would be part of staff supervision and personal development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff treat every child as an individual and respond to a wide variety of needs with the same commitment and enthusiasm. There is an emphasis on enabling every child to achieve their maximum potential and to experience a range of opportunities.

There was a good intuitive awareness and knowledge of the operating standards within the home and good evidence to support the regular internal monitoring of standards of care being delivered. There are a number of staff changes with part-time staff not getting as many hours as previously. The service is having to shut on some nights to meet financial targets. This has not had an effect of the amount of care each family receive.

All staff are subject to safe recruitment and selection procedures and visitors to the home are also checked in by staff. Parents expressed very positive views about the organisation and leadership of the service. They felt confident that their children were safe while in short-break care, had good communications with staff and were kept informed of significant events.

The home is monitored internally each month by the Registered Manager and externally by another manager from within the authority on a Regulation 33 visit. However, the manager is tending to visit when there are no children available to talk too. From the reports produced the Regulation 33 visitor last spoke to young people during her visit in April 2010. It is important to seek the views of the young people and to build the relationship each month.

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):

- undertake Regulation 33 visits at weekends or evenings to maximise the

opportunity to consult with the children. (NMS 34)