

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040491
Inspection date	11/08/2011
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/02/2011
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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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short-break care for up to six children and young people with a learning disability or combined learning and physical disability. The home operates for five nights each week spanning Wednesday through to Monday morning, with a maximum of 6 places per night. Packages of care vary in length and frequency. Most children stay for one night at a time but others stay for weekends. Where possible children stay in the room they are familiar with and with children of similar needs and interests. The building is single storey, providing level access. Enclosed play areas are provided outdoors where children receive support to access a range of play equipment.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Overall there are effective quality systems in place to promote the welfare of children. The service demonstrates outstanding practice in most areas and the attention to equality and diversity allows for each child to make the most of their stay.

The staff are enthusiastic and committed to the children and their families, clearly understanding varying needs and taking action to sort out problems and overcome disadvantage. A parent said that this is a 'brilliant service, I can talk to any of the staff, my child is much happier since they started coming here and their behaviour has improved at home'.

Children benefit from spending time with peers and from the range of leisure activities available. Consultation with young people is evident and all are considered to be able to make choices. All aspects of the service have been considered in improving inclusion and integration.

Some monitoring of the service does not meet requirements, compromising independent review of the quality of care. Feedback from stake-holders is not always included in these reviews limiting information available in making a detailed analysis of the service offered.

Young people do not have access to the internet; this limits their access to the wealth of information available to support learning and development.

The use of electronic monitoring devices is discussed with parents and placing authorities. There is not a written policy to support this practice. It is not clear how

children will be informed of its use and protected from potential abuse of such a system.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out Regulation 33 visits, records the date of the visit and whether it is unannounced, and interviews children, their parents and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the care provided, then prepares a written report on the conduct of the home (Regulation 33 (4)(a)&(b))	08/09/2011
28 (2001)	ensure that the registered provider maintains a record of each child accommodated which contains information specified in Schedule 3, namely the statutory provision under which the accommodation is provided. (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	08/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide internet access to young people to increase the range of educational resources which support and promote learning and allows access to social networking sites within the bounds of e-safety (NMS 4.4)
- create a written policy which supports the use of any electronic monitoring equipment (NMS 10.5)
- encourage children to have their views recorded following any sanctions (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the door between the kitchen and dining area meets fire safety standards. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Children are helped to develop a positive self view where they are clearly valued as unique individuals. They are given lots of help and encouragement to try out new things and develop skills through various experiences and activities.

Parents reported improvements in verbal communication skill because these have been encouraged by staff. Some young people benefit from special programmes of exercises and activities to help develop speech which will serve them well in all aspects of life as they can be better understood. Other children have gained a trust in adults which was missing before, improvements in behaviour are notable and concentration spans have been lengthened.

Without exception the staff have high aspirations for children who all have targets and goals to help them develop self care, independence skills and improve behaviour where this is a problem. Regardless of their starting point all young people have made some progress in this environment.

Independence skills are encouraged and some young people were keen to help with cleaning and hoovering; cooking is also a favourite activity.

Children benefit from regular attendance at school which is usually only limited by absence caused by illness.

Most young people make a successful transition to adult services enabled by keyworkers who are involved in transition planning, attending meetings and visiting resources with young people until they are settled. Those who have reached school leaving age go on to college or the sixth form at school to do further studies or vocational courses.

A social worker commented that: 'This is a brilliant place and a service that families looking after children with complex needs really value. The staff keep me updated and attend reviews. Family crisis have been avoided because they are really supportive and will be flexible about providing services.'

Children are given choices about activities, food and where to spend time in the house. They also decide what they want to watch on the television and which bathroom they want to use to name just a few of the decisions young people are encouraged to make. Activities in the community are enabled with close supervision depending on ability. Young people have grown in confidence in using park equipment such as climbing frames and exercise equipment. The staff practice risk management rather than risk avoidance and this contributes to making the most of opportunities and building self esteem and confidence in children.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **outstanding**.

The staff fully understand the needs of each child and there is a careful mix of children taking into account ability and age to allow for friendships to develop. It is clear that some have developed friendships and get on well together. This practice is also avoiding potential difficulties, for example staff avoid mixing very noisy children with children who are noise averse.

Children benefit from high staffing numbers which allow significant amounts of individual time to be spent with the children and for them to do individual activities or spend time together. If barriers to achievement or inclusion are identified these are acted upon, maximising the potential for development.

Staff support children to make progress in every aspect of their lives, for example providing guidance and support to parents which has allowed a young person to return to live safely at home. Young people are also helped by staff through transition to adult services. Keyworkers will visit provisions with them, advocate on their behalf in meetings with adult service providers and make sure young people are settled into new services.

Prior to children staying overnight the staff use introduction visits flexibly. Parents and children can visit and stay for tea as many times as necessary to make them feel comfortable and confident in this environment. The staff are skilled in enabling children to settle quickly and in reassuring anxious parents. One parent reported that she is pleased her child can choose which bedroom to sleep-in. She said: 'They pay attention to the small things that matter like choosing a duvet cover with favourite characters on. My child's confidence with adults has improved and he is sitting at a table to eat, saying please and thank you.'

Staff can demonstrate that children are well cared for: warm, friendly and attentive relationships are evident. They are fully aware of the likes and dislikes of children and their individual needs.

Celebrations are held for significant events including events for young people moving on to adult services. A photographic record of their time at the home is provided for them to keep.

Practice is underpinned by comprehensive planning documents and risk assessments covering all aspects of the service provided. Care plans are detailed and focus on measurable outcomes; where possible children are involved in planning these and parents and carers are always involved.

Comprehensive individualised programmes of intervention are devised and implemented to address specific issues, for example, improving speech or addressing inappropriate behaviour.

Health needs are well managed. All staff receive training in first aid with many being first aiders, they carry equipment to activities which will allow for a speedy response in an emergency or should a young person have a seizure. Consent forms for the administration of medication have been signed by those with parental responsibility, only the team leader on shift administers medication to avoid any confusion or mistakes. All staff have medication training.

Care plans do not contain detail of the statutory provision under which accommodation is provided. The legal status of children is unclear to staff and there is potential for reviewing of care within specified time scales to be missed.

The home provides for children across a broad range of those with additional needs including learning difficulties. Regardless of ability all are assumed to be able to communicate and make choices and this is encouraged throughout their stay. The views and wishes of children are sought and a range of communication methods are used, including pictures, symbols and sign language.

A range of activities in the community are available; some of the favourites include visits to parks with lots of equipment, bowling and playing football. As well as choice of activity young people can choose who to do activities with and who to sit with on the bus.

Open days and fun days are provided for children, their parents and siblings, recently these have included a music and drum workshop and circus skills day. A sports day is planned for the summer holidays. These family times have been very popular and allow for parents to meet together and share experiences, offering mutual support to one another with the expertise of qualified staff on hand to offer advice. Consultation forms are completed following these events and are available in several formats for children. All are positive and provide evidence of the benefit to children of this time spent with peers and their families.

The home is purpose built; it is spacious, homely, well maintained and recently decorated. All children have their own bedroom with en-suite facilities. There are many resources including a large sensory play room, toys, games and televisions. The outside area is also well equipped with swings (including swings for users of wheel chairs) soft and grassy play areas, as well as a large trampoline and sand pit. There is also a space with tables and benches which allows children to eat outside in the summer.

Children do not benefit from access to the internet to support education and provide access to the wealth of information available. Some of the older young people would like access to social networking sites to allow them to keep in touch with friends. Lack of access also limits the potential to teach children about the dangers involved and how to keep themselves safe when using social media.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children appear safe in the home and there is careful planning of the mix of young people. Whilst this practice encourages friendships it also tries to avoid power imbalance, limiting potential for bullying or abuse amongst children. Staffing numbers also allow for close monitoring to deal with any issues quickly. A counter bullying policy is in place, however there are not any reported incidents and bullying has not been a problem.

Young people have produced a set of rules which are displayed around the home.

These included: knocking before entering a bedroom; young people not being allowed in each others rooms; and handing in valuable items for staff to take care of ,such as mobile phones.

The identification of visitors is checked before they enter the premise and a visitors book is signed. All staff receive training in child protection and how to safeguard children. Some staff are studying safeguarding at a high level to make sure that all possible is being done to identify and stop any abuse.

A separate inspection of recruitment and staff records was made at the service providers head quarters in October 2010. This demonstrated safe recruitment practice and robust vetting in line with legislation and designed to protect children from harm.

All trips, activities and visits are risk assessed. A generic risk assessment is made for each activity and then staff will consider any further issues with individual children and also the mix of children. For example if children are not safe near roads they will hold hands with staff. Some children are afraid of dogs and staff are aware of this, they reassure children and avoid any contact.

Young people are supervised well both inside and outside the home, children are allowed to take age appropriate risks to enhance their confidence and support skills development. Good use is made of equipment in the park including quite high climbing frames, zip wires and exercise equipment.

A joint protocol with the police is in place to address any incidents of children being missing from the home, records dating back to 2003 demonstrate that no such incident has not occurred.

Each child has a behaviour management plan which identifies specific vulnerabilities and any problematic behaviour. Systems are put in place to manage and change unacceptable behaviour, these plans are shared with parents and schools to reinforce positive changes in all areas of a child's life. Changed is encouraged through the use of modelling, praise and rewards.

A dedicated piece of child protection work has allowed a young person to return to live at home, has kept other children safe and avoided the risk of behaviour becoming criminalised.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint should it be needed to protect children from serious harm to themselves or others. Use of restraint is very rare and usually amounts to a gentle guiding but is always appropriate and used as a last resort. Only one sanction has been recorded since the last inspection and this involved the use of time out for the young person to reflect on their behaviour; on this occasion the young person's views following the sanction where not recorded limiting the potential to fully analyse its effectiveness.

Health and safety risk assessments are in place, and equipment such as hoists and

lifts are regularly serviced to make sure they are in good order. Water temperatures are checked and all taps in bedrooms and bathrooms have temperature restrictors fitted to avoid children being scolded.

A fire safety risk assessment is in place as well as fire detection systems, fire doors and extinguishers. The door between the kitchen and dining area did not have an automatic closure or fire retention strip. Regular testing of fire alarms and evacuations take place; all children have an individual evacuation plan so that the staff know exactly what to do in the event of an emergency. Silent evacuations take place for children who are sensitive to noise and may be very distressed at the sound of the alarm.

Regular checks are made on electrical appliances and gas installations to make sure these are safe and do not pose a threat to children.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

The home is managed by a competent, confident and experienced manager and deputy manager who have the full support of a dedicated and enthusiastic staff team. The needs of children and their families are at the core of the services provided and all attempts are made to meet the diverse range of needs presented and enable children to make the most of their stay at Number One.

A development plan is in place and the manager has a commitment to compliance and continuous practice improvement. The manager and deputy have kept up to date with recent legislation and copies are available in the staff office. Changes have yet to be fully discussed with the staff team and embedded into practice. During school holidays there is an emphasis on spending time with children and in September when children go back to school there will be increased opportunity to look at these changes and discuss as a team the implications for practice.

The staff team are well trained and supported through regular supervision. Annual appraisals and personal development plans which identify training needs and career aspirations for the future are in place. Staff reported that they were happy in their work and the atmosphere around the home is very positive.

The team is quite stable and staff work additional hours if needed to provide consistency for children. If agency staff need to be used the manager tries to employ those known to children. Children benefit from seeing familiar faces, continuity of care and staff who understand their needs.

At the last inspection requirements and recommendations were not made.

The home has a good relationship with the local community, using facilities in the town and surrounding areas. A local club is donating a large flat screen television to the home.

The Statement of Purpose is readily assessable and provides clear information about the aims and objectives of the home. Parents, social workers and those purchasing services can match needs appropriately and know what to expect. The children's guide is available in several different formats and at varying levels so that the majority of children are able to access information. A guide to the service is also available for families as well as a guide on how to make a complaint.

Regulation 33 visits to the home do not always meet requirements, lacking dates of visits and whether these visits were unannounced. Feedback from stake-holders is not always included limiting information available in making a analysis of the service offered.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.