

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	13 August 2009
Inspector	Mick Walklin
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Date of last inspection	28 April 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

The home is one of two services providing short breaks for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Up to five young people can be accommodated at any one time. It is a single storey building and accommodation for young people comprises of five single bedrooms, two lounge areas, a dining room and a sensory room. The home is located close to the town centre adjacent to a residential area and a local nursery school. It is within easy access of local facilities and services. There is car parking space to the side of the building and the enclosed gardens have a range of play equipment. Four young people were staying at the home, three of whom were present for the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected.

This is a good service with good outcomes for young people. Young people receive good levels of support from competent, well-trained staff. Low staff turnover provides continuity of care. Young people's needs are fully assessed and care plans provide clear guidelines about how to meet those needs. Young people are protected by robust child protection and anti-bullying procedures to ensure that they are safe during their stays. They are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour and staff are skilled at managing challenging behaviours. Staff are sensitive to young people's needs for privacy and dignity, especially when providing support for those young people that require high levels of support with personal care. The home is fully equipped to meet the needs of young people with mobility difficulties. Parents value the service provided and have confidence that their children are safe.

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 no actions from the previous inspection. A recommendation relating to fire records has been attended to.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Catering staff are well informed about individual nutritional needs, likes and dislikes. All food is freshly prepared and cooked. There is detailed guidance in care plans relating to diet, likes and dislikes and food presentation to ensure that young people's needs are met. Young people that choose to eat a restrictive diet are encouraged to try new foods to broaden their diet. Meals are treated as social occasions although some young people require one to one supervision at separate tables. Young people do not have free access to the kitchen because of risk factors, but staff ensure that drinks and snacks are offered at regular intervals. Young people commented, 'They ask us what we like. They get us to eat fruit and salad. We get plenty of vegetables', and 'They feed us well; definitely'.

Young people's health needs are clearly identified and met. Parents and carers maintain responsibility for health care arrangements, although there are emergency arrangements with

a local surgery and Accident and Emergency Department nearby. Health needs are clearly documented in care plans, including the emergency treatment of conditions such as epilepsy. Nurses provide medication training in more complex administration procedures which enables young people with complex health needs to access the service. Parents and carers have confidence that their children are well cared for. Comments included, 'The home fully supports my child in all these areas. Their attention to detail is excellent'. However, young people with potential atlanto-axial instability are not routinely risk assessed for activities such as trampolining. Young people bring their own medication with them during their stays. There are robust procedures for checking in medication, ensuring that instructions regarding dosage are clear. Staff are vigilant in checking dosage instructions with parents if there are any discrepancies and ensuring that medication arrives in correctly labelled containers. Medication is securely stored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. Although some young people require high levels of support and supervision, staff ensure that young people's privacy is respected, especially when assisting with personal or intimate care. Discrete supervision is provided for young people who are more independent. An intercom system is used to alert staff if young people require assistance at night. Personal records are securely stored in the staff office. Staff have a good awareness of their responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality and this is covered during their induction.

Young people, parents and carers have good information about how to complain, which is available in accessible formats such as symbols and easy-read. A parent commented, 'I have complained once. It was dealt with efficiently and promptly'. Most young people using the service have significant communication difficulties. Care plans therefore contain good guidance about the behaviours exhibited when individuals are happy or sad.

Young people are protected by robust safeguarding, anti-bullying and missing persons procedures. Staff receive safeguarding training and have a sound knowledge of the procedures to follow if they have concerns. Comments from parents and carers included, 'I know my child is safe and well cared for. I am confident that if there was a problem they would contact me immediately', and 'This is an excellent service providing peace of mind'. The home caters for a very diverse range of needs from those with complex health needs and mobility difficulties to those with severely challenging behaviours. Those with challenging behaviours may have a negative impact on other young people so admissions have to be planned carefully, although this is not always possible. Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety of the more vulnerable young people. Most young people using the service have a lack of understanding about common hazards in the community such as road safety. They receive high levels of supervision and are escorted at all times when out. External doors are kept locked for safety reasons and the garden and play area are fully enclosed by a boundary fence.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour where applicable. Staff receive training in the management of challenging behaviours which ensures consistency with the schools that young people attend. Care plans contain good guidance about how to support young people if they become angry or frustrated. There have been a high level of incidents over the summer holiday with a corresponding high level of physical interventions to ensure

the safety of the young person or others. These are well recorded and cross referenced with incident forms, although one physical intervention record was missing. There is minimal use of sanctions, limited to use of 'time out'. Staff deal effectively with incidents, making efforts to establish what is upsetting the young person, whilst ensuring their safety.

Young people's health and safety is promoted by robust procedures. Regular fire and health and safety checks are conducted to ensure that the environment is safe. Each young person has an individual evacuation plan to ensure that they can leave the building quickly in an emergency. However, fire alarm checks were suspended for a period of two weeks recently because of the impact they were having on young people staying at the time. Health and safety advice was sought and a risk assessment was put in place. Weekly checks have now resumed. The servicing records inspected are up-to-date. No new staff have been appointed since the last inspection, but previous inspections have found recruitment and selection procedures very rigorous. All visitors to the unit are asked for identification and to sign the visitors book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good individual support when they need it. Young people using the service have a wide range of needs including complex health needs, physical disabilities, autism, and challenging behaviours. Matching considerations therefore takes a priority. Where a child has communication difficulties, staff are skilled at interpreting what the child may be saying through their behaviour. Communication aids such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) or objects of reference are used to facilitate communication. There has been a delay in staff accessing training in the use of PECS, which remains a priority. This means that staff are not yet in a position to be fully consistent with schools in this method of communication. Staffing levels enable young people to receive one-to-one (or higher) support.

Young people continue to attend their usual place of education and staff ensure that young people are ready when school transport arrives. Parents and carers say that staff liaise when necessary with schools and contribute to school reviews as required.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs fully assessed. Care plans provide clear guidelines about how to meet young people's needs. They are of a high standard and contain detailed information in a concise format, written in the first person as if they were the child's voice. Parents, carers and young people (where appropriate) are fully involved in the care planning process. Comments included, 'Care plans are implemented exceptionally well', and 'Our son's care plan is continually updated'. Six monthly reviews are held with all relevant professionals invited.

Young people only stay at the home for short breaks and are not away from their parents or carers for extended periods. They are able to maintain contact with their families by telephone if needed. Parents and carers are welcome to visit the home. There is good communication with parents and carers. One commented, 'We have a home book which both parties correspond in. This is fully informative telling me what my daughter has been doing during her stay'. Parents value the service that the home provides. One said, 'I couldn't do without (the home). It is a second home to her. It is brilliant now when my daughter tells us about her friends'.

Young people are introduced to the service in a way that meets their needs. Following a referral, staff ensure that they have detailed information about young people's likes, dislikes and routines. A series of introductory visits are arranged prior to overnight stays.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their daily lives. They are encouraged to make choices, either verbally or by using a variety of non-verbal communication methods. An advocacy service visit regularly, with plans to involve them further in consultation.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home only provides short breaks. Staff will contribute to pathway planning and reviews as appropriate and follow any independence programmes that young people may be on.

Young people stay in a well designed home providing sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is well equipped to meet the needs of children with disabilities. For example, some rooms have integral tracking hoists, hallways and doorways are wide enough for wheelchair users. There is a range of specialised equipment available such as, profiling beds and hi-lo baths. Staff are well trained in the use of this equipment and young people have detailed moving and handling plans. The home is situated close to local amenities. Physical restrictions on movement are in line with risk assessments and young people's comprehension of danger. There are effective precautions to ensure the security of the home from unauthorised persons.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Although most young people currently using the service do not have specific ethnic or cultural needs, placement plans have provision to identify these. Staff are well aware of disability issues and are committed to ensuring that any disability is not a barrier to opportunity.

The Statement of Purpose is generic to all of the local authority's children's homes and provides basic general information about the services and facilities available. An appendix provides more specific information about the home. A simplified version in accessible formats is produced for young people. Parents and carers receive a promotional pack which contains the Statement of Purpose, Young Person's Guide and various information leaflets.

Low staff turnover has ensured that an experienced staff group provides continuity of care. Staffing levels are generally good to meet the needs of young people. However, staffing levels have been increased over the summer holiday to meet the needs of specific young people. With the manager not currently able to recruit into vacancies, this has led to an increase in the reliance on agency staff. Staff are well trained and supported. New staff receive a comprehensive induction to prepare them for their role. There is a strong commitment to staff development with nearly all staff having completed a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or above. There is a comprehensive training programme to ensure that staff receive regular training updates. Adequate handover time ensures effective communication between shifts. Procedures are in place for the manager to monitor the operation of the home through monthly audits with any shortfalls being identified. Young people have records of their stays at the home which contribute to an overall record of their progress. These records are securely stored.

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
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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 that young people with potential atlanto-axial instability are risk assessed for activities such as trampolining (NMS 12)
- ensure that all physical interventions are recorded (NMS 22).