

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michelle Moss
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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 care home offers care and accommodation for young people who have learning disabilities, who are aged from seven to 17 years old. The home is registered to care for young people of both genders, however, at the time of this inspection males occupied all four places. The home is a detached property standing in its own grounds. Accommodation is well maintained and suitably decorated, creating a good first impression. There is an enclosed rear garden, where the young people can play safely and the premises are suitably adapted to support their needs.

The home is situated approximately two miles from the town centre and it is close to bus routes that connect it with the local community and the rail link in the city. The home also has its own vehicle. The home has sufficient space and rooms where the young people can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

The organisation responsible also operate an independent 52-week school. It is co-educational and caters for pupils and students from the age of seven years old up to 19 years old.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was a full inspection that was conducted unannounced. All key standards were assessed to form a judgement on the provision of care.

Outcomes for young people are overall satisfactory although there are many good features that crossover a number of standards. There were no actions or recommendations arising from the home's last interim inspection. There is a positive relationship established between young people and staff resulting from the highly effective use of augmented communication in which meaningful engagement is secured. Young people receive dignified care and support, which is tailored to reflect their individual needs. However, there are a number of shortfalls that impact on the home meeting a number of national minimum standards. Many of these shortfalls relate to the quality and depth of recording rather than practices that directly effect young people. For example, there are weaknesses in records relating to medication, menus, countering bullying and water safety. More significantly, there is an absence of a internal robust self-evaluation to assess the home's own performance, including identifying any trends or patterns that require action. Also, less than 80% of the staff have achieved their National Vocational Qualification in the Caring of Children and Young People, and staff are not afforded regular supervision in which their performance can be assessed.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made as a result of the home's last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people receive good support in respect of their health and development. The home ensures young people have access to all health related services to meet their physical and emotional health needs. Close links are established with health professionals to ensure continuity of care can be appropriately maintained. The home is good at obtaining parental consent on medication and first aid. Medicines are safely stored, although administration records are not always managed in a manner that ensures they retain an accurate log to safeguard the welfare of young people. For example, when required medication is administered the time given is not always clearly legible. Also, there are a number of crossed out signatures that invalidate the record and make it hard to identify if medication has been correctly administered. More positively, each young person has a health plan that is utilised effectively by staff to promote their well-being. Staff are good at responding to young people when they are unwell by making the appointments for advice or treatment.

Young people are supported by staff that are trained in first aid. However, the first aid box available to administer emergency aid is not regularly checked to ensure the contents remain fit for purpose.

All young people have different food preferences which are respected by staff. A menu planner is used as a guide although young people will still select their food choice on a daily basis. However, what is actually served to young people is not captured in a record which can then be assessed by the Registered Manager to ascertain if young people are receiving a varied and wholesome diet. Despite the absence of a concise record, the home continues to work closely with school and health professionals to investigate ways of improving diets to help enhance the well-being of young people. This approach has seen a reduction in some young people's weight.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are sensitive to young people's needs and promote their privacy and dignity. Confidential information held about young people is appropriately maintained to ensure personal data remains protected. There is a complaints procedure in place for ensuring families and young people can raise concerns. For young people this is achieved through the staffs' knowledge of their behaviours and by effectively using different forms of augmented communication. Staff are advocates for young people

and will take action if they notice triggers that are causing a young person to become distressed. Nevertheless, the staff are not fully assessing the risks of potential bullying relating to behaviours or identified potential times or places where the risks of bullying can be greatest. Also, staff have not been afforded awareness training in countering bullying that they can apply in their care of young people. More positively, staff training logs show that the staff team receive regular training in child protection and safeguarding. They also have access to policies and procedures that can be deployed to protect young people from abuse.

The support for young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour is comprehensive. This is based on individualised management strategies that include de-escalation and the use of visual prompts that help the young person to self manage their own behaviour. This results in physical interventions only being used as a last resort when there is an immediate risk of harm. If physical intervention is necessary, the staff team have access to training that equips them with the skills to keep young people safe and also the required documents to record their action. Young people have access to a behaviour support team who work closely with the home and regularly review any set programme, including making necessary charges to ensure support remains tailored to a young person's individual needs.

There are regular health and safety audits completed. These include fire, gas and electrical safety checks. However, hot water temperatures are not rigorously monitored in the same way to ensure that young people's safety does not become compromised. This extends to an absence of checks being made to assess that the hot water accessed by young people is not causing any risk of potential scalding. On a more positive side, risk assessments are in place for behaviour, activities and any risks associated with the vulnerable of young people going missing from care. These assessments help the staff to identify the levels of risk and apply the right level of protection to keep young people safe. However, these are not regularly reviewed to ensure they remain up to date.

Recruitment of staff is seen as a key area of safeguarding young people. There are robust procedures in place to ensure all appropriate checks on suitability of workers are completed before they are appointed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are good at helping young people feel secure, having self-respect and feeling confident enough to deal with challenges in life. An example of this has been the support given in a young person's transition to adult care. Young people are equally well supported by a staff team that take a positive approach towards their education, including understanding preferred methods of learning. There is good communication established within the home and school to ensure young people are being encouraged to aspire and to reach their full potential. There is excellent use of assessments that help to enhance life skills in preparation for adulthood.

Young people receive support that is delivered in a coordinated and therapeutic manner that adapts with their changing needs. To facilitate this, the staff team ensure young people enjoy a broad range of activities that positively challenge personal growth and development. This extends to encouraging personal interests and undertaking various leisure activities. For example, young people have recently started using a local gym and are accessing sensory facilities within their local community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has an informed placement plan that is made up of various documents including a health plan, risk assessments, daily care records and all related looked after children reports. These collectively provide detailed information about the needs of young people. However, the placement plan is not comprehensive. For example, it has limited information about how staff are to meet a young person's religious persuasion, their culture and promote their heritage. Also, details over contact arrangements are basic and do not show the extent of families' roles in a young people's lives. The design of the plan is not specifically child-focused. This limits young people gaining some level of knowledge about the contents of their plan that reflects their level of understanding and type of communication used.

There is clear recognition by the Registered Manager that admissions need to be effectively managed to reflect the specific needs of young people. This is done with sensitivity to reflect individual circumstances.

Statutory reviews to monitor young people's placements take place at the required intervals. A formal report is completed by the home that shows the progress and achievements a young person has made during their stay. This helps the young person, their families and professionals to reflect on areas of development and plan future needs. There is wonderful use of communication aids that help young people to become actively involved in making decisions about their daily lives. This includes objects of reference, picture exchange communication systems, sing-along signing system, verbal prompts, social stories, photograph references, computerised communication systems and points of reference.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is located central to a wide range of community facilities that are important in helping young people's personal growth and development. The size and layout of the service matches the needs of young people well. The staff team support young people to personalise their home to reflect preferences and to have home comforts that create a homely surrounding in which to live.

Staff help young people to build up life skills that will prepare them for their futures.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There is a quality assurance system in operation which has two elements. The first involves a representative of the organisation visiting the home and assessing various elements of young people's welfare. The second area comes from the Registered Manager conducting Regulation 34 checks by auditing records. The depth of evaluation is limited and mainly relies on a checklist approach that fails to evidence that all documents and records listed under Schedule six of the Children's Homes Regulations are regularly checked. There is no evidence of how performance is monitored or how patterns or issues are identified and what action is taken to improve or adjust the provision of care. This shortfall restricts young people having their care rigorously monitored and continuously adapted in the light of information gathered by the Registered Manager. Also, young people are not supported by a staff team whereby the majority hold an appropriate qualification for working with children and young people. In addition, staff do not receive the required level of supervision in which their performance can be regularly assessed. More positively, staff commence a structured training programme when they start their employment. An ongoing training programme follows on that helps to enhance staff's skills to keep young people safe and their welfare protected. For example, the staff team are trained in epilepsy, autism, the care of medicines, fire safety and food hygiene.

The number of staff members on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of young people. This extends to enabling young people to stay safe, pursue hobbies, undertake activities and attend appointments essential to sustaining their health.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. There is limited integration of promoting equality and diversity in to areas of care planning, including identifying how cultural and religious needs are to be met. There is no impact assessment undertaken in areas of monitoring the performance of the home that relates to equality and diversity. Nevertheless, there is excellent use of augmented communication that enables young people to sustain meaningful engagements in decision making.

The service has a written Statement of Purpose that covers the aims and objectives of the home which helps to inform interested parties to learn about the provision. Young people have a specific booklet that helps them and their families to be also informed about what they can expect from the home.

Young people's needs, development and progress are captured through the recording systems operated by the home. However, the style of recording does not enable them to gain access to their records in a format which reflects their methods of communication.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
33	ensure the review of the quality of care is monitoring all matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals (Regulation 24.1 and Schedule 6)	29/10/2010
29	ensure staff working at the home have the required qualifications for the work they are required to perform (Regulation 26.3b)	31/12/2010
2	ensure the placement plan remains under review. This must include any risk assessment that forms part of the plan. (Regulation 12.2)	29/10/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the placement plan includes details about young people's cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met. Ensure contact arrangements are detailed. Ensure young people can access their plan in accordance with their level of understanding. (NMS 2.1,5,6,)
- maintain a record of food menus as served to demonstrate food offered to young people is suitable and varied (NMS 10.4)
- make sure first aid boxes remain fit for purpose (NMS 13.5)
- make sure staff are offered training in awareness of counter bullying. Carry out a risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest. Carry out risk assessments for young people over any potential risk of bullying (NMS 18.2,5 and 26.2)
- make sure hot water accessible to young people is maintained at no more than 43 degrees Celsius and keep a record of any testing (NMS 25.8)
- ensure all established staff receive at least one-to-one supervision monthly and more frequently for new starters (NMS 28.2)
- make sure the time that a medication is administered is clearly recorded. Also make sure that records are regularly monitored to ensure they remain concise. (NMS13.2)