

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michelle Moss
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Date of last inspection	04/03/2010
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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 service offers a home to four young people with learning disabilities. The home is registered for both genders. The home is a detached property standing in its own grounds. There is an enclosed rear garden. Premises are suitably adapted to support the young people's needs.

The home is situated approximately three miles from a nearby city centre. The home has a vehicle and is close to bus routes that connect it with the local community and rail links. The home has space and rooms for young people to pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

The organisation responsible for the home also operates an independent 52 week residential school.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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 good, with the home meeting the vast majority of the national minimum standards and in some cases exceeding them. There were no actions or recommendations arising from the home's last interim inspection. Staff are highly committed to the care of young people and work hard to provide individualised tailored support to enhance their personal safety, health and well-being. There is a strong emphasis given to enhancing young people's lives through promoting independence and supporting them to reach their potential in everything they do. Nevertheless, there are also areas of weakness. These include countering bullying, water temperature safety, first aid training and not having a robust internal self-evaluation to assess the home's own performance, including identifying any trends or patterns that require action. Also, with changes in staffing occurring the home is no longer securing 80% of the staff team with a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

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 are encouraged to stay healthy through active lifestyles, including going swimming, walking, attending dance clubs and by being members of a local gym. Young people have access to a comprehensive array of services that address their physical and emotional health needs. All aspects of care are captured in an informative health plan, which staff use as a resource to ensure young people remain healthy and safe. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of medication. This ensures young people receive the correct medication important to their health. Members of staff involved in the care of medicine received training. However, not all staff have received training in administering first aid which they could be required to use in an emergency.

Staff work alongside young people to help them increase their knowledge of basic nutrition and to receive a balanced diet. Staff are excellent at encouraging young people to make meal choices. This meaningful engagement enables young people to make choices over what they like to eat, including sustaining links with food related to their heritage, culture or religion.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

All young people are treated with dignity and respect. For example, staff fully respect young people's rights to privacy. This is enabled through the outstanding use of communication aids which help young people to practice their rights over when they want staff engagement and when they do not. There is a clear complaints procedure that ensures families and young people can raise concerns. For young people, this is in a format that best matches their preferred method of communication. The staff team understand their responsibilities to safeguard young people's welfare. There is a strong recognition of the importance to maintain vigilance, including staff being confident to apply the whistle blowing policy if required to ensure young people stay protected. There is a clear procedure and policy in place that can be used by staff if a young person was to go missing. This includes having clear search plans. The process is applied in a coordinated way to take into account the vulnerability of young people and the importance of keeping them safe and protected.

The staff team base their support of young people's behaviour on individual management strategies that include de-escalation and the use of verbal and visual prompts that help young people to self-manage their own behaviour wherever possible. There is a clear threshold for when physical intervention is used which is based on risk. A hierarchy of techniques for physical intervention is used when there is an immediate risk of harm. This takes into account the young person's age and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. A clear log is made whenever physical intervention is necessary. This shows restraint is only applied for the minimum time

possible.

There are regular updated risk assessments for all aspects of safety including behaviour and activities. These assessments take into account young people's daily activities and how they can impact on behaviour. These are carefully monitored by the organisation's behaviour support team who play a key role in regularly reviewing programmes and making any necessary changes in the interests of young people. However, the staff team are not fully assessing the risks of potential bullying relating to behaviour or identifying potential times or places where the risks of bullying can be greatest. Also, the staff have not been afforded specific awareness training in countering bullying that they can apply in their care of young people. This limits young people having staff supporting them who are sufficiently knowledgeable about the extent of risks and how to respond to any form of potential bullying.

There are good systems in place to monitor, record, and prevent risks to health and safety at the home. Regular fire drills are held at different times to ensure young people and staff remain familiar with safe evacuation procedures. 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 if hot water accessed by young people is causing any potential risk of scalding. More positively, there is meticulous attention paid to recruitment to ensure only suitable staff are appointed. Once new staff commence their employment, they are required to follow a structured induction in which safeguarding is a key focus.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff treat young people with courtesy and respect. They are equally very good at helping young people to reach their potential, support attainment and celebrate achievements. All young people are able to access a broad and balanced curriculum including a specific residential curriculum, which is tailored to their individualised needs and abilities. There is some wonderful work done by staff to help young people build up life skills to broaden their independence, self-esteem and confidence. For example, the staff team have done some fantastic work in building young people's confidence to go and have their hair cut in the local town. These various experiences are captured in books of achievement which are both accessible to young people and their families.

The staff team positively promote consultation and engagement of young people through the wide range of communication aids available. For example, all staff use a full range of symbols, pictures and object reference to help young people make informed decisions. The staff team are also excellent at using choice boards that help young people make decisions about things such as meals and leisure activities. The staff team carefully monitor changes in behaviour as a way to identify any additional needs including if young people need any emotional support.

Each young person has a key worker who plays an important role in advocating views and opinions. Every day is well structured and means young people always have opportunities to pursue interests, undertake activities and play an active role in their local community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Strong links exist between the home and families to ensure the holistic needs of young people are fully met. Admissions are always planned to ensure the specific needs of individual young people can be assessed. Once a placement commences, a placement plan is drawn together and utilised and updated by staff to help map achievements and identify changes in needs. However, the plan is not very explicit about how a young person's ethnicity, race, faith or beliefs are to be met and celebrated. Also, the format of the plan is not designed to be readily accessible to young people, which takes into account their chosen methods of communication and level of understanding. Nevertheless, in practice the staff team are good in celebrating differences including arranging themed nights and working closely with families to help meet cultural needs. Furthermore, the staff will use a range of communication aids to help young people to become actively involved in making decisions about their daily lives. For example, the home uses a selection of objects of reference, visual and verbal prompts, picture exchange communication systems, social stories and photographic reference to secure meaningful engagement.

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 placement. This helps the young person, their families and professionals to reflect on areas of development and plan future needs.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is based in the community and is close to local amenities including the school attended by young people. The home is fully furnished to a good standard and reflects well the needs of young people and their preferences. Young people are supported well to individualise their bedrooms which enriches their sense of identity. Excellent targeted support enables young people to make the best opportunities of their placements to build up life skills that reflect their age and understanding.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home ensures all new staff receive a thorough induction training programme. All shifts start with handovers to aid staff to receive a briefing on the care of young

people. Staff confirmed excellent communication exists throughout the home and school, including having effective policies, regular training, supervision and meetings. However, with changes in staffing occurring in recent times, the numbers of staff holding a National Vocational Qualification for working with young people has dropped. This has meant young people do not always have staff supporting them who hold the required qualification. More positively, the home continues to provide a high standard of care where staff provide young people with one to one support. These high staffing levels enable young people to stay safe, pursue hobbies, undertake activities and attend appointments essential to sustaining their health.

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 limits young people having their care rigorously monitored and continuously adapted in the light of information gathered by the Registered Manager.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff team show a strong commitment towards appreciating and celebrating differences. The staff team effectively support young people to develop their cultural and religious identity through the well established links with families. Nevertheless, these good practices are not mirrored in the development of the placement plan.

Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them easily useable by staff. However, they are not as equally accessible to young people. More positively, young people do have a range of information available to them that reflects their preferred method of communication. Young people are able to use these resources to practice their rights and stay informed about things that are important to them. For example, the young people's guide is available in a pictorial and symbol format.

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
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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)	30/10/2010
29	ensure staff working at the home have the required qualification for their work with children (Regulation 26.3b)	31/12/2010
12	ensure staff working at the home receive first aid training. (Regulation 23c)	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- 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)
- enhance the safety of young people in the setting by ensuring that a record is maintained of hot water temperature checks (NMS 25.8)
- make sure the placement plan includes details about a young person's culture, religion and racial needs and how these will be met. Also increase young people's access to their plan in accordance to their level of understanding. (NMS 2.1 and 2.6)