

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059853
Inspection date	10 June 2009
Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	18 December 2008
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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

This home provides a short breaks service for children and young people of either gender between the ages of eight and 18 years who have a permanent and substantial disability. It is a purpose built bungalow with facilities that are appropriate to meet the needs of the young people who use the service. The home has six bedrooms, three bathrooms, two lounges, a dining room and a kitchen. There is an enclosed garden area, with specialist play equipment, at the rear. The home is within walking distance of local shops and other amenities and the town centre is a brief car journey away.

There were four young people present during the inspection.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection was arranged to consider how well the service meets the needs of young people when they stay at the home. All of the key standards in all of the outcome areas were assessed and the progress that the home has made in relation to recommendations from the last inspection was also considered.

Young people's individual needs are met very well when they use the service. Comprehensive assessments and excellent communication with parents and professionals outside the home enable staff to put in place plans for care and support that are specifically tailored to meet their individual needs. Young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent team of experienced staff who understand their needs very well and who are committed to promoting their welfare and to ensuring that they enjoy their stay in the home.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The two recommendations that were made at the last inspection have been met. The service has a well developed system for consultation with young people so that their views and wishes are taken into account in all aspects of their care. Since the last inspection, a number of staff have gained a qualification at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3, or equivalent, so that the home has reached the target required by the standards and young people are cared for by a team of staff who are suitably qualified.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Due to the nature of this service, parents retain the overall responsibility for the health needs of their children. However, there are highly effective systems in place in the home to enable staff to promote the good health of young people when they use the service and to care for them very well. For example, detailed plans which are developed from comprehensive health needs assessments, enable staff to identify the specific support each young person will need to ensure that their good health is promoted. Staff are trained to meet specific needs of young people, for example, in the care and support of young people with epilepsy. They have strong links with a range of professionals outside the home so that they can ensure that young people

receive the additional support they may need when they stay at the home. They work closely with parents to make sure that the information they hold is up-to-date and accurate.

The home's systems for the administration of medication are robust and very well managed. For example, all staff have up-to-date training in medication procedures. The system requires parents to bring in specific amounts of medication to cover their child's stay so that the home does not keep a stock of medicines. Records are thorough, are kept up-to-date and are regularly checked by senior staff in the home. These systems provide excellent protection to vulnerable young people. Staff are also trained in the delivery of first aid so that young people are cared for safely in an emergency.

Staff plan menus to reflect the young people's preferences and cultural and religious requirements. All young people are provided with a diet that is healthy and fruit and healthy snacks are always available. Due to their specific needs, some young people have diets which are limited. Staff always encourage young people to try different foods and report success in this area. Meal times are pleasant, social occasions when all staff and young people eat together.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Robust procedures, detailed risk assessments and clear plans ensure that young people are cared for safely. For example, staff training in child protection procedures is kept up-to-date and they have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children. This enables them to protect young people from abuse. Staff are also trained to respond positively to challenging behaviour and do this very effectively so that there are few incidents that result in a physical intervention and young people are cared for in a safe way. Sanctions are minimal and are applied fairly. Relationships between staff and young people are very good. Staff have a very positive view of the young people they care for and are very keen to help them to enjoy their stay. Young people are confident with the staff and happy in the home and they respond very well to the way they are cared for.

Young people are encouraged to understand their rights and to let staff know if they are unhappy or dissatisfied. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the diverse needs of the young people in their care and of their preferred method of communication so that they are able to understand if a young person is unhappy and take appropriate action. It is evident from this inspection that staff are proactive in ensuring that young people, despite their limited communication abilities, are encouraged to express their views and are listened to. Young people have access to an independent children's rights worker who visits the home regularly. In addition, groups of young people have been supported by staff to take part in consultation days organised by the Children's Rights Director for England.

Bullying is not an issue in the home. The booking process allows the service to plan care for young people in groups who are generally compatible and to avoid placing together young people who do not get on, which minimises the risk of difficulties arising between them. Appropriate staffing levels and individual risk assessments and support plans enable staff to provide a good level of support to all the young people. Although there are individual assessments of risk that address the issue of bullying, the home does not yet have a specific assessment of the times and places where the risk of bullying might be greatest.

There has been no incident of a young person going missing from the home since the service opened, although there is a clear protocol for staff to follow to protect young people should this occur.

Staff respect the right of all young people to privacy and confidentiality and care for them in a way that promotes their personal dignity. Care practices and the facilities in the home provide appropriate privacy to all young people. For example, some young people are able to use the telephone and there are facilities to allow them to do so in private. Young people have an individual bedroom where they can be private and the bathing and toilet facilities also allow them privacy.

Health and safety matters are managed very well so that young people benefit from staying in an environment that is kept safe. For example, there is a range of individual risk assessments and specific plans for young people, such as personal emergency evacuation plans, which enable staff to identify how young people are to be cared for safely. Equipment and installations are regularly serviced to make sure they are safe and fire drills take place at the required intervals, so that staff have practised in evacuating young people in an emergency.

The local authority has robust procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Thorough checks are undertaken on all staff to assess their suitability to work with vulnerable children and young people. The manager is trained and experienced in safe recruitment practices and has worked to support young people's participation in the recruitment process. The identity of all visitors to the service is checked and the property itself is kept safe so that young people are protected from unauthorised individuals gaining access to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from the excellent level of support that they are given when they stay at the home. Individual support plans are detailed so that young people's needs are known to all the staff team. The established key working system is effective as one-to-one meetings are successful in helping staff to identify the service young people and their family want. Established links with agencies outside the home and good communication with parents enable staff to make sure that young people have access to additional services as they need.

As this is a short breaks service, the main responsibility for the education of children remains with their parents. However, staff are keen to promote young people's education when they stay at the service and give them excellent support. They visit schools regularly so that there is good communication about the needs of the young people. They also attend education reviews so that there is information in the home about the progress of the young person and how school is working with them. The home itself is equipped with toys and games so that young people can learn and develop through play. Young people also have the use of a computer. Every young person has recently gained a recognised qualification whilst staying at the home, which also promotes their learning. The work that staff do with young people in relation to this qualification is tailored to meet their specific needs and abilities. The manager is currently working with the head teacher of one of the schools that young people attend to develop a joint, person centred reviewing system to promote even closer working.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a detailed individual support plan which is drawn from information that is gained through the comprehensive assessment process. Plans are written in consultation with parents, placing social workers and workers from other health agencies and address every aspect of the young person's needs, so that staff know how to care for the young person and so that care within the home is consistent. Plans are monitored in the home and are also reviewed formally through the local authority's reviewing process so that they can be updated to make sure the ongoing needs of the young person are being met by the service.

Every admission to the service is very carefully planned. Following a comprehensive assessment, consideration is given to which service can best meet the young person's needs and a process of gradual introductions to the home takes place. Plans progress at a pace that is entirely appropriate to the individual needs of the young person and their family. Staff also work hard with young people, their families and other agencies to help young people move on from this service in a planned way so that they and their families feel supported during the transition process.

Promoting and maintaining family contact is not an issue in the home, given the nature of the service, but some young people like to keep in touch with their parents when they stay and staff help them to do so.

Staff make sure that parents are consulted regularly so that they are kept up-to-date with the progress of their child when they stay at the service and so that they are given opportunities to make their views known. Consultation with young people themselves is also excellent and enables staff to understand how young people feel about their stay and how they would like to be cared for. The service has recently sent out a questionnaire to children to ask them for their views. As with other documents, this is produced in a mix of simple language and symbols, appropriate to the needs of young people. The home is also producing a newsletter that will be sent out to parents at intervals and which young people will be able to contribute to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The work that staff do with young people helps them to develop skills which will help them later in life. They set objectives for young people about the kind of things they will try to achieve during their stay, which differ according to their individual needs and abilities. For example, young people can learn to set tables, make their own drinks and snacks or develop personal care skills. Staff understand the importance of planning a smooth transition for young people when they leave this service and are very involved in the process. They work closely with parents to help them to identify services that young people may use and support parents and young people on visits to those services. They also provide detailed information on the needs of young people to workers from other teams, to help them to formalise plans for future care.

Young people benefit greatly from being cared for in a home that is very well maintained and comfortably furnished and that is suitably adapted to meet their specific and diverse needs. Young people have the use of single bedrooms that are well furnished, corridors are spacious so that young people can move freely around the home, and bathrooms are properly adapted and equipped. The lounge and dining room are of an appropriate size for the numbers and needs of young people who use the service and there is a well equipped sensory room. The home is appropriately located in a residential area and the exterior is well maintained so that

it fits in with other properties in the community. Young people take an obvious pride in the environment and feel happy in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Young people benefit greatly from being cared for in a home that is managed very well and from being looked after by staff who are qualified and properly trained to understand and meet their diverse and complex needs. Information from this inspection confirms that there are always sufficient staff on duty who know the young people, to support them and to make sure that they are cared for safely and their welfare is promoted. Having a regular team of staff provides young people with continuity of care.

The service has a clear statement of purpose that is kept up-to-date and that describes how the home works and how young people are cared for. The document states that the ethos of the home is to enable every young person to achieve and to develop and to provide care and support that is individually tailored to meet their specific needs. This inspection confirms that the home meets its stated objectives very well. The young person's guide to the service is produced in a style that is appropriate to the needs of the young people who use the service, with colourful pictures, symbols and simple language. It is supported by a DVD which staff can use to help young people to see how the home works. The service is looking to produce another DVD which will be done with the full participation of young people who stay at the home.

Management systems are robust and very effective. They ensure that the work of the home and the care that young people are given remains of a high standard. For example, the manager checks all records regularly and consults with young people, parents and agencies involved with the home, as well as providing support and guidance to staff. An independent person visits the home every month, checks records and meets staff and young people, to provide an independent scrutiny of the service. Detailed reports of these checks confirm that issues that are raised are responded to promptly.

Information that is held in young people's files is detailed and kept up-to-date. All other records are cross-referenced to information in young people's files so that there is a permanent record of their stay in the service. Files and other sensitive records are stored securely in the office to protect confidentiality.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are trained in valuing diversity and promoting equality and this ethos is reflected throughout the policies and procedures that guide their work. Staff have an excellent understanding of the diverse and complex needs of the young people they look after and make sure that the care they receive is tailored to meet their specific needs. The service is committed to making sure that all young people are treated equally and fairly.

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 Children's 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):

- carry out a recorded risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in the home in which the risk of bullying is greatest (NMS 18.5).