

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC060034
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Break
Registered person address	Davison House 1 Montague Road SHERINGHAM Norfolk NR26 8WN
Responsible individual	Hilary Bridget Richards
Registered manager	Melanie Jane Julier
Date of last inspection	12/02/2014

Inspection date	23/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides a much valued short break service for 43 children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders and other learning disabilities, including some physical disabilities. Staff prepare a range of care packages with flexibility according to need and resources. Parents and external professionals are very positive about the service provided. Staff know the children and young people well and respond to their individual communication methods. They are also alert to children and young people's comfort and moods. This ensures that they enjoy their stays, make good progress and achieve agreed outcomes which are clearly outlined in highly individualised plans. As one external professional commented: 'I've seen some children be really happy to be there when they aren't anywhere else. Staff genuinely care about the children. They are not fazed by real difficulties. They take even the most challenging young people out into the community, young people who everyone else is restricting because of the difficulties.'

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practices which are carefully developed in relation to children and young people's individual vulnerabilities, risky behaviours and differing awareness of danger. This protects children and young people well. Their needs are at the centre of staff practice, and the staff group are highly committed to making their short breaks enjoyable and safe.

It has been a challenging year for the service with a very significant turnover of staff within the organisation. New staff have now settled in and the staff team is back to functioning well. The decrease in staff quota though has constrained some support activities they used to be able to do. Managers' time is used more on direct contact and support activities, with a consequent adverse impact on their ability to keep up with managerial tasks. This means that in some ways the service is doing less well than they were at their last full inspection. That said, they continue to provide a good service to children, young people and their families. As one parent said: 'I think they are absolutely fantastic. The staff go beyond the call of duty. There are always there to support me and my child. He loves coming here. I don't know what my life would be like without them.'

The inspection has identified a number of shortfalls including two breaches of regulation and eight recommendations to improve practice. Although this amounts to a substantial improvement plan, it has to be balanced against the significant progress that children and young people make in this home in response to the high standard of care they receive. The shortfalls have also not caused actual harm to the welfare or safety of children and young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a registered charity. It provides respite care and short breaks for up to six children at any one time, who have a learning disability or a social and communication disability within the autistic spectrum. Children may also have associated physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/02/2014	Interim	good progress
11/09/2013	Full	good
25/03/2013	Interim	good progress
19/09/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	Ensure that any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 are notified without delay to the persons indicated in column 2 of the table (regulation 30 (1))	27/03/2015
31 (2001)	ensure that the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises are reviewed, with specific reference to government guidance provided July 2014. (Regulation 31 (1A) (b))	27/03/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children are enabled to communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in the home, with specific regard to use of temperature probes with hot food (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out, with specific regard to garden play equipment (NMS 10.8)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children, with specific regard to the management of epilepsy (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that all existing care staff are working towards the level 3 Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma within 6 months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with specific regard to new staff in their probation period (NMS 19.4)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually, and that this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure that visits of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks of any disciplinary measures. (NMS 21.7)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people make good progress during their stays at the home. Transitions are well managed so that new children and young people feel as comfortable as possible when they first come to stay in the home. They are introduced to staff and have the opportunity to visit as often as necessary beforehand. Introductions are individualised and go at their pace. This ensures that they are as confident and secure as possible in their time away from home.

Children and young people make measurable progress in their development and in their acquisition of new skills. This includes learning independence skills such as self-care and learning to sleep on their own in a bedroom. These small but significant steps help to develop their ability to accept change and different settings. As one social worker confirmed: 'Both my young people have made good progress since they have been coming here. One has significantly improved her use of augmented communication systems and has learnt independent skills such as dressing herself. Her family confirm to me that they too see this positive difference and they can see that she can grow and change.'

Children and young people's progress is tracked against personal targets in their six month review meetings. As one parent confirmed: 'I have seen my son make a lot of progress in the short time he has been going there. He's had intensive support to help him to settle there. He is now able to sit on his own more and play independently. He is starting to ask me now for things which he didn't do before. He loves all the activities such as swimming, soft play, walks on the beach and in the park. They are really helping him to learn how to play. It's improved his social skills.' Meal times are shared experiences at the dining tables and this further supports children and young people to sit together as a group and interact together. Parents say that they like the 'opportunity factor' provided for their children, and the home's ethos to push them to be as independent as possible.

Children and young people have a wide range of resources available to enable them to have fun both within the home and in the very well-equipped garden area. This includes opportunity to enjoy the wonderful sensory room which provides sensory stimulation and a quiet area to relax in on the soft furnishings or heated water bed. They take part in indoor activities such as drawing, painting and play with interactive toys. This develops their communication skills and assists them with fine motor skills using hand and eye coordination.

Children and young people are positively involved in the community. The home has three large vehicles that children with varying mobility needs can use, including those who use wheelchairs. This enables all children and young people to access community resources and to take part in activities that may not otherwise be

available to them. This includes skiing, rock climbing and even indoor sky diving. Staff are not deterred by disability when trying activities with the children and young people. They want to open the children's eyes to new experiences beyond what they might think they can do. This raises children and young people's expectations, helps them to have fun, learn new skills and thereby develop their confidence. That said, some staffing constraints in recent months have limited the frequency of such trips out.

Quality of care

good

Children and young people enjoy their short break stays at the home. This is evident in the warm and positive relationships they have with the staff. They are welcomed into the home and they demonstrate their feelings about being there in a positive way. Professionals and parents who responded to surveys and spoke with the inspector praise the service highly. They feel that their children are provided with a great range of opportunities. As one parent said: 'I think they are absolutely fantastic. The staff go beyond the call of duty. They are always there to support me and my child. He loves coming here. I'm so confident he safe and having a good time there.'

Staff use positive behaviour strategies well in accordance with each individual child's needs and placement plan. For example, they use diversion, praise and encouragement, and, where appropriate, try planned ignoring within careful parameters. Their focus is on helping children and young people understand consequences and boundaries. The geography of the home is helpful in allowing children and young people to be diverted to quiet time when needed. Positive behaviour management is further supported by proactive shift planning which is very structured and clear about the delegation of tasks and responsibilities. This helps staff prepare effectively for the children and young people coming into the home. It promotes a consistency of approach.

The home environment is relaxed and homely. It has recently been re-decorated to a high standard. The bedrooms are comfortable and welcoming. Staff make sure that the bedding and layout reflect the needs and likes of the child staying for a short break. Where possible children and young people are given choices about which bedroom they would like to use. The home is able to offer a good mixture of bedroom environments from neutral to themed. This meets a range of children and young people's sensory needs. The home has the appropriate equipment and bathing facilities to support children and young people to have their needs met with dignity and respect. This includes hoists, showers and bathrooms with accessible equipment.

Placement plans for children and young people are comprehensive and focus on key individual targets. These are regularly reviewed in multi-agency meetings and outcomes are evaluated in line with those goals. This ensures that children and young people are supported to progress to their optimum. There is good partnership

working with schools, families and health professionals to ensure continuity of care. As one specialist health professional affirmed: 'They are incredibly flexible with families. They are very good at being prepared to fit with families according to need. Their level of knowledge about the children is excellent. For example, they know the triggers around challenging behaviours. They really like the children. This shows in their patience and in their unconditional acceptance of them. They are like this with even the most challenging young people. They play to their strengths and focus on this.'

Health care needs are clearly identified on individual care plans. All staff hold a first aid qualification. Quiet time is created in busy shifts to enable safe management of medication. Any discrepancies in the medication received when children and young people arrive are carefully checked and addressed appropriately. This ensures that arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. Although the health care remains the primary responsibility of parents, staff work in conjunction with health care professionals and receive additional training to meet health care needs. This means that the vast majority of children and young people have their health care needs effectively met throughout their stay. That said, there are some staff that have yet to have training in the management of epilepsy. This has on one recent occasion meant that a child had to have a hospital attendance which could have been avoided.

Staff are particularly effective in helping young people with transition into adult services. For example, they visit new settings with them and use pictures to help them to understand and express their views about the proposed move. Staff share information and pass on care plans to the new adult units. Staff have gone out after young people have left to assist when problems have arisen. This helps to ensure young people are as confident and secure as possible in their new environment.

Carefully scheduled care episodes ensure the children and young people's diverse needs are met as far as possible. Staff flex the bookings to try to accommodate as far as possible individual needs of the children and young people, including supporting friendships where possible. There are though some occasions when competing needs have to be managed. The service always aims for a compatible group together on the short break but there are a small number of children and young people who would be challenging with whatever mix of children. On these occasions, sufficient staff ratios and careful shift planning alleviate most difficulties that arise.

Staff are observant and sensitive to changing moods and expressions of the children and young people. They are aware of the different ways that children and young people express their wishes and feelings and they are also aware when a child is unhappy or distressed. They enable them to communicate preferences as they are asked in the right way by people who can understand their needs and have the relevant skills to listen. Staff communicate clearly and with brevity. They know how to use alternative communication systems and do so in accordance with children and

young people's needs. Picture symbols are used throughout the home to promote communication and choice about issues such as food and activities. Digital aids are also used. This ensures continuity with the children and young people's schools. Further training in is provided so that new and established staff continue to develop their skills in effective communication with children and young people who are hard to reach. Staff convey a sense that they enjoy children and young people's company and value them as individuals. However, there are only limited proactive strategies in place to obtain non-verbal children's wishes, feelings and views about the care they receive in the home and to explain the concept of rights, self-expression and participation. This inhibits children and young people's meaningful participation in service planning and development.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children and young people are safeguarded by staff who have a good understanding of the individual needs of children and young people with disabilities and complex needs. Central to the home's practice are effective safeguarding procedures which protect children and young people well. Staff work collaboratively with safeguarding agencies, medical professionals and parents to ensure that any concerns about children and young people's safety are appropriately shared with the relevant professionals and addressed. One young person's social worker said: 'I've no concerns about the safety of any of my children in the home. I have some young people with very challenging behaviour and the unit has been proactive in looking at this. They have asked for a meeting to share information and think about strategies. They are looking at how they could change their way of working with him if this would help.'

Staff use positive and proactive behaviour management strategies in line with agreed plans. As one external professional confirmed: 'They have a caring and nurturing approach and consider all the needs of the child with individuality. As a professional I have always had a good working relationship with staff and they have always carried out any requests I or parents have made, including behaviour strategies shared to tackle challenging behaviours.' Consequently, there is minimal use of physical intervention. Staff do everything possible to try to avoid the need for restraint. Training encourages staff to always think about de-escalation strategies. They use role play in team meetings to evaluate various stages when different staff will decide a restraint is necessary. They look behind the behaviour to understand why it is happening, and read situations well. Staff learn from such incidents to reduce the need to use physical interventions wherever possible. The manager maintains good oversight of those that do occur. Where appropriate, the effectiveness of behaviour management plans is reviewed with an external specialist team. This helps to promote the safety and welfare of the children and young people.

Staff identify children and young people's particular vulnerabilities in individual risk assessments, and have management plans in place to address them. These are

reviewed and up-dated as necessary. The physical environment is safe and appropriately secure. The home has recently been inspected by the fire service and found to be compliant with all fire safety measures. Children and young people with mobility issues or other particular vulnerabilities have personal evacuation plans to promote their safety. However, the home has failed to risk assess the children and young people's use of the outdoor play equipment such as the zip wire. While there have been no accidents to date, managers acknowledge that this is a significant oversight on their part as injudicious use of such equipment has potential to cause children and young people harm. It was also observed during the inspection that specific risk management strategies were not followed in relation to checking hot food before it is served. Although staff were vigilant to ensure that no child actually came to harm, it is a shortfall that the temperature probe was not used as required.

Leadership and management

adequate

There is a suitably qualified and experienced Registered Manager in post. She has a diploma in social work and an appropriate management qualification. She has 17 years' experience in social care. Her deputy manager provides competent and committed support. Together they represent consistent and stable management. This has been important in light of significant changes in the staff team in the last six months.

Currently the home benefits from a resilient and dedicated staff team. However, there has been a substantial changes in the team due to internal organisational decisions. This has meant a very high number of staff have left and new staff have been employed. The home has also effectively lost two staff from the previously agreed quota. Staff have had to change their shift patterns so that they work split shifts to maintain sufficient staff on contact time with the children and young people. This had meant less staff time for liaison with families, attendance at meetings and paperwork. The adverse consequences of this have been mitigated in the short term by the dedication of staff who stay on and do extra time without pay to complete placement plans and attend education reviews. Managers have also taken on tasks that may previously have fallen to key workers. Nonetheless, morale has remained positive and staff have got on with things and looked at different ways of delivering a good service with less. New staff have brought in energy and creative ideas with the end result that the whole team remains passionate and committed to their work. This is endorsed in feedback from parents and professionals.

Some negative consequences are evident though. Managers have not kept up with all supervisions, especially for the staff who require twice monthly supervisions because they are still in probation. Some staff have not yet received relevant training in competencies such as the management of epilepsy and the supervision of staff. This impacts on their ability to undertake their role. Some staff have also worked in the home for more than six months and have yet to start their basic professional qualifications. This does not meet national minimum standards and could potentially

mean they do not have up-to-date knowledge for their role. Staff appraisals have been mostly completed but do not take into account any views of children and young people the service is providing for. This misses an important source of information to drive forward improvement for children and young people.

Regular monitoring by the manager ensures that young people are safe and enjoy a good standard of care. This process helps to highlight the strengths of the home and areas for development. Quarterly reports by the manager are evaluative and contribute to the improvement agenda. Monthly reports from the independent visitor contain good consultation with relatives and children to inform opinion about the conduct of the home. However they do not demonstrate that checks are made of all disciplinary measures such as sanctions and do not provide enough constructive criticism. This limits the effectiveness of their quality assurance scrutiny.

The home is well resourced materially with new vehicles, excellent play resources and extensive re-decoration. This helps to make children and young people feel valued and have opportunities to try new activities. The home has good relationships with neighbours and the local community. Members of the local community have been involved in fund-raising for the new garden equipment, and resource –sharing arrangements are in place with a local school. This helps to break down prejudice and fears about disability.

Notifications have not always been sent to Ofsted as required or in a timely way, particularly in relation to significant health issues requiring hospital attendance and emergent child protection concerns in the community. This prevents the regulator from assessing the home's response to such incidents and ensuring that children and young people's welfare is being promoted. One final shortfall is identified in relation to the home's location risk assessment. This document is not drawn up in line with government advice and fails to provide information about the social and crime profile of the local area. This potentially inhibits service planning and development.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.