

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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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 children's home is registered to accommodate up to eight children. The home offers respite and long term care for children and young people with a learning disability, aged between 10 and 18 years of age.

The service is provided in a large house in a residential area. Accommodation is provided over three floors. The service does not provide care for children and young people who use wheelchairs.

There are good transport links and the home is close to a shopping area. There were six young people living at the home, of whom two were involved in the inspection to some degree.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an interim, unannounced inspection, carried out as part of the annual inspection programme. All key national minimum standards in the area of staying safe were reviewed as well as selected standards relating to meals and the building. In addition, progress on actions and recommendations set at the previous inspection were checked.

The service is graded as satisfactory. Staff encourage young people to become more aware of the need for privacy. Staff have received child protection training which is regularly updated and are aware of what to do should a safeguarding concern arise. The building is maintained to a satisfactory standard, however, furnishings and fittings serve to give the home an somewhat institutional appearance. Management fail to fully safeguard young people from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the manager was asked to ensure safe food storage arrangements. Staff now ensure that food is stored in line with safe food handling and hygiene regulations. The manager was asked to ensure risk assessments are kept up to date. Risk assessments are now kept under regular review. The recording of accidents and complaints has improved, with staff now recording every issue of concern.

At the last inspection, the responsible individual was asked to ensure that all parts of

the children's home are kept reasonably decorated. A program of redecoration has been undertaken, however, further improvement is required.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from a variety of nutritious home cooked foods which reflect peoples choices and cultural heritage. Young people are provided with regular drinks and snacks, in particular, when they come home from school. Young people are prevented from accessing the kitchen unsupervised due to the high levels of risk, however, they enjoy getting involved in making cakes and basic meals. All mealtimes are supervised by staff as young people require high levels of support. Plastic picnic style cutlery is used at meal times by all the young people. This does not reflect individual needs or promote homely living.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The organisation fails to ensure that young people are fully safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. For example, there is no evidence that gaps in employment have been explored and that references are followed up with a telephone call to ensure their validity. References which are undated and addressed to whom it may concern rather than the home, have been accepted, and employers references are not on all occasions provided on headed paper. The organisation has submitted staff checks to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). In the interim the organisation has allowed staff to work at the home with 'ported' CRB checks from previous employers without following current CRB guidance on the portability of these checks.

Staff encourage young people to become more aware of the need for privacy. For example, when young people expose themselves or act sexually inappropriately in the home, they are supported to go to somewhere private.

A pictorial complaints procedure is in place for the children and young people to use. However, young people in reality would need significant levels of support to make a complaint. Complaints therefore would in most cases originate from parents or an advocate. A record of any issues of concern is maintained. The nature of young people's disabilities mean that bullying is not an issue experienced in the home. Similarly all would be highly vulnerable if unaccompanied by an adult outside the home. High staffing levels and appropriate security arrangements ensure children and young people are effectively safeguarded from going missing. The exits to the building are secured with a keypad alarm system, which, staff advise, has been fully discussed with placing authorities. However, no evidence of this is documented in young people care files.

Staff have received child protection training which is regularly updated and are

aware of what to do should a safeguarding concern arise.

Young people living at the home have limited understanding of the behaviours they exhibit which can on occasion be challenging to staff. Staff recognise that young people use behaviour as a way of communicating and seek to offer alternative means of communication and distraction techniques. No detailed individualised behaviour management plan is in place which guides staff as to how to prevent, manage and calm particular behaviours. Staff are trained in restraint and are clear it is only used as a means of keeping themselves or the young people safe. Physical intervention will usually consist of holding hands or legs to prevent kicking or biting. Sanctions, as such, are not particularly effective with the current client group due to their limited understanding of consequences. It is not possible to ascertain how often restraint takes place, or sanctions are imposed, as these records were not available on site. The inspector was advised these had been inadvertently removed by the consultant.

The building is maintained to a satisfactory standard. The provider ensures that risks to children, young people and visitors are minimised through the regular checking of appliances and services. A broken toilet was pointed out to management who advised it would be replaced. The manager ensures that regular checks and servicing of essential fire equipment takes place. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home as a whole does not provide homely, domestic style accommodation. Whilst young people are provided with accommodation, furniture and equipment which meets their needs relating to their disability, this is in some cases institutional in appearance and prevents the home having a warm and homely feel. For example, televisions are placed inside wooden protective boxes and the sofas are made of bright blue thick plastic. Some communal areas have been redecorated recently, although further areas, such as a bathroom on the first floor, have not been refurbished or redecorated, and the bathroom has a broken toilet.

Children and young people who have physical disabilities are provided with an adapted bathroom. Bedrooms are single occupancy and children and young people are able to personalise their rooms with pictures and photos to varying degrees. Young people benefit from a selection of communal spaces such as 'chill out' rooms and activity room with ball pool, in addition to the lounge and dining room. The garden is regularly enjoyed in the summer and has new play equipment installed.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
23	ensure that all parts of the children's home are kept reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(c))	30/04/2011
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Regulation 26 (Regulation 26)	09/03/2011
22	ensure records of restraint and any sanctions applied are maintained on site at all times (Regulation 17(4))	09/03/2011
10	provide sufficient and suitable cutlery (Regulation 31(5)(a))	09/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- evidence that any measures used to safeguard young people from going missing have been fully agreed with all relevant parties as being necessary and appropriate, and are clearly documented as such within the placement plan (NMS 19.8)
- ensure that placement plans detail sufficiently how the assessed behaviour management needs of each young person will be effectively met (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that references are followed up with a telephone call to ensure their validity and that employers references are provided on headed paper (NMS 27).

