

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jill Marriott
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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 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.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection looked at the key standards for all outcome areas. It also reviewed the progress made in meeting the actions and recommendation of the last inspection. These were about the privacy and dignity of the children, staff employment records, the upkeep of the premises and staff training records.

The arrangements for supporting the health needs of the children are sound. The systems in place for monitoring medication are accurate and medication records are kept up to date.

The food served daily is satisfactory. Monitoring records show that use by dates on food kept in the fridge are not always recorded and this may affect the health and well-being of the children. Mealtimes have changed and now include the use of two dining areas. This reduces the overcrowding situation experienced in the past and ensures a more relaxed atmosphere in each room.

The staff team are sensitive to the needs of individual young people. They offer one to one support where required and ensure that the dignity of young people is promoted at all times.

The home has systems to promote the physical safety of children and young people. There are policies and procedures relating to bullying, behaviour management and children missing without authority. Physical safety and security is maintained through regular checks and testing of systems and equipment.

The home has an accident and incident monitoring book but accidents and incidents are not always recorded. Therefore, individual risk assessments are not always updated to include new information that could further ensure the well-being of the children.

Education is promoted and children attend school regularly. Contact is maintained daily with classroom staff and through the home school book. The home provides a service to escort children to and from school. Key staff attend parents evenings and open days and join in with celebrations of achievement. Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with family and friends and staff are available if required to supervise this.

Staff training is provided and is monitored to ensure details are kept up to date. Individual training profiles are kept on staff files. Recent child protection and safe care training was

attended by all staff. Staff are able to explain the procedures in place to protect the children and young people.

Two actions and two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. One action is repeated from the last inspection.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The responsible individual was asked to make arrangements to ensure the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of the children. The staff have discussed the issues raised and are more vigilant when working with the children. They are aware of where children are and what they are doing at all times. This ensures their dignity is better protected.

The home was asked to keep clear information about staff. The records checked were satisfactory with relevant information about staff recorded. The rota gave correct details of the staff working on the day of the inspection.

The home was asked to ensure all staff receive a range of appropriate training. Since this action was made all staff have received child protection and safe care training. The manager has developed the training programme and has included individual training profiles on staff records. This helps to ensure that appropriate training is offered to enable staff to work competently with the children.

The home was asked to ensure that all areas of the home are kept clean, reasonably decorated and maintained and free from offensive odours. At the time of the inspection the home was free from offensive odours. The home is still in need of maintenance and redecoration. This action is repeated in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is now using two rooms for meals. This provides space for staff to sit with young people and use mealtimes as a relaxing and social occasion. Special diets are catered for and where appropriate children are given the opportunity to try new and different foods to widen their experiences.

Some of the food that is kept in the fridge does not have appropriate use by dates recorded. There is a written date but it does not say if this is the date the food was received or the date to be used by. This could cause confusion and may affect the health of young people. The menu for the week was not available at the beginning of the inspection. This was found towards the end of the visit. The food served for the evening meal was similar to that recorded on the menu.

The good health of children is promoted in the home. Children and young people's individual health needs are identified and assessed. This information is recorded in a clear, accessible plan detailing how specific and general health issues will be addressed. Particular health needs that may impact on future outcomes for the child are identified. Staff seek out the services needed to address these for example, involvement of specialist health workers such as the children and

adolescent mental health service. Staff assist children to attend general and specialist health care appointments. There is information in the home about health and social issues and about specialist advisors. This information is displayed and is readily available. However, because of the special needs of the children they would require support to approach and access the services. Health issues related to ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith and religion are recognised and specialist advice is sought.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the home's policy for the administration of medication. The home operates to an effective medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which addresses the use of prescribed and non-prescribed medication. Staff have access to this policy and confirm they have read it. Staff show they understand their roles and responsibilities. The home has provided medication training and this is updated. Quality assurance systems in place confirm that the policy is used in practice. Staff are aware of the importance of medication records and of the necessity of them being kept up to date. The medical records seen during the inspection were all correct.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The privacy of children and young people is respected. Staff are sensitive to individual needs and afford children and young people as much privacy as possible when carrying out personal care. Each bedroom door has a lock on the outside but not inside. This ensures children can leave their rooms when they need or want to but other young people cannot enter without permission. Staff understand about confidentiality issues. Information about children and young people is stored centrally in the main office which is kept locked at all times.

There are no complaints recorded in the complaints book since the last inspection. However, one concern seen in the daily log book should have been in the complaints book with actions recorded. There is an accessible complaints policy which families are aware of should they have any concerns about the service. The policy is available in simple English and in picture format for the young people. The specific needs of individual young people means that they would need support to make a complaint.

The welfare of children is promoted by the child protection and safe care policies and procedures. Staff are aware of these. They have recently received training to ensure they understand how to put the policy into practice. They were able to describe correctly how they would deal with specific scenarios about child protection and safe care.

The home is staffed to a reasonable level and this helps to protect the vulnerable client group. There have been no issues of bullying identified since the last inspection. There is an appropriate bullying policy in place. In some cases due to the disability of individual children, challenging behaviours may unintentionally impact on others. Staff support children and young people to reduce the probability of this happening. Training has been provided to help staff manage difficult behaviour and use appropriate methods and techniques to support young people. Staff on duty during the inspection showed a calm, caring and positive approach when faced with the challenging behaviour displayed by one young person.

The home is aware of the vulnerability of young people if they were to go missing. There is a policy and procedure to follow and risk assessments are in place to minimise occurrences. The risk is further reduced by having appropriate staffing levels and good building security.

The home has a procedure for recording accidents and incidents and for notifying significant events to the professionals involved and to Ofsted. There are occasions identified where accidents and incident are not properly recorded.

The home provides physical safety and security. Careful checks are made to ensure the health and safety of the premises. There are up to date gas, electric and a portable appliance test certificates available. There are risk assessments for all aspects of safety within the home and the garden areas. Risk assessments include issues related to fire and children and young people's behaviour and activities. These assessments are in general kept up to date. However, the manager talked about an incident where a young person injured a member of staff. The incident was tracked as it should have been reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). On this occasion, the incident was not reported or recorded in the accident or incident book. The young person's risk assessment had not been reviewed since the incident occurred. This could cause further difficulties in the management of the young person's behaviour because it is not clear whether or not staff are aware of the incident.

Children and young people are protected by the procedures in place for vetting staff and visitors. The vetting procedures are thorough. Staff are not confirmed in post until all relevant checks and references have been received. Visitors are asked to sign the visitors' book and are monitored while on the premises.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The placement plan for each child or young person addresses how support will be provided. Staff are open to addressing a range of possible needs including those related to their disability, race, culture, sexuality, gender, religion and language. The home has links with a range of helping agencies and the staff look for services to fit individual need. Staff have a rapport with the children and they appeared happy and relaxed during the inspection.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for children and young people. Education is not seen as an activity confined to school. Learning is part of every day life in the home and staff try to include a range of learning activities each day. For example, young people are supported to help with the preparation of food and keeping their own private space clean. They also help to clear the tables and put things away.

Staff ensure children are able to choose and take part in a range of leisure activities. There are activities on offer each day. Staff encourage young people to make full use of leisure time both inside the home and in the community. In the home there are things to do like soft play, television, face painting, books and games. The garden provides a large play area with swings, football games and a large bouncy castle available when the weather is good. On weekends and in school holiday's staff take children to the coast and on outings to theme parks, the boating lake, museums, horse riding and the cinema. Staff regularly invite families to attend outings with the children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The needs of young people are assessed to ensure the home can meet their needs. There are clear plans in place from the beginning of each placement to ensure that staff are aware of the needs of individual young people. Staff engage well with children and young people and children appear relaxed and happy with staff and in the home environment. On two occasions staff were observed successfully using calming techniques with a young person who was becoming agitated. Children's care is reviewed regularly and care plans are updated in line with statutory requirements.

Young people are able to maintain contact with family and friends. Relatives are welcome to visit children and are invited to go on outings arranged by the home. Children and young people enjoy seeing their families and staff give practical support to make contact possible. Arrangements for maintaining contact are addressed in individual care plans.

Consulting with and listening to children is part of the care practice in the home. Discussing future plans for care and talking to children about the running of the home is incorporated into children's meetings and key work sessions. Children are supported to make decisions on matters affecting them and are encouraged to attend and participate in the child care review process.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Each young person has their own room with sufficient furnishing to meet their needs. Young people are able to personalise their room with their own choice of photos, pictures and soft furnishings. The accommodation is in part homely and decorated. The garden is in good condition. It has new equipment including a large bouncy castle.

There are areas of the home which are not homely they and are in need of refurbishing. For example, the lounge curtains are faded and one is completely missing and the paintwork needs renewing. There is a picture on one wall and a television on another. The manager explained that the curtains would be replaced when the home is refurbished in August. In August the children will be away on holiday and the maintenance team will be refurbishing the whole building.

The home is situated in close proximity to shops, schools and transport links. There is a leisure centre and other useful community facilities close by.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose sets out what care the home will provide and how it will be provided. It is written in a style that can be understood by children, young people and their families. The children's guide is provided in simple English and picture symbols to aid the understanding of the children.

Staff are clear about the management arrangements and understand who is responsible for their individual support. They confirmed that they receive regular supervision and this usually takes place monthly. Records are kept of each supervision meeting.

The staff team is competent with a range of skills and experience amongst its members. More than half have achieved a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People or have an equivalent qualification. Staff have the opportunity to attend a number of short courses relevant to their work.

The number of staff on each shift is sufficient to meet the needs of the children and young people. Staffing levels are checked daily and additional staffing is arranged when needed. The home has a bank of staff known to the children who work in the home as required. This helps to provide consistent care.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The staff team has a balanced mix of male and female staff who reflect the backgrounds of the children. Cultural, religious and individual needs are defined in care plans.

There are systems in place to review and monitor the quality of care. However, the systems are not always robust enough. One recent incident where a child seriously injured a member of staff was not recorded in the accident or incident book or reported as required under RIDDOR.

Regulation 33 reports were seen in the home. These were up to date. Ofsted has not received any copies of these reports since January 2010. The home's records show these reports have been emailed to Ofsted.

Children's files and records are kept up to date. The home has also produced a photographic record of each young person's experiences while living at the home. These records are nicely put together and give a good insight into individual children's development and progress. Children can see their records on request and staff are available support them to read them if required.

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
16	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	26 July 2010
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(C))	30 August 2010
33	ensure the registered person records and monitors all accidents and injuries sustained in the home. (Regulation 34(1) Schedule 6(4))	26 July 2010

Recommendations

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

- make sure that food is stored appropriately with use by dates clearly displayed in line with safe food handling and hygiene regulation (NMS 10)
- make sure that the risk assessments for children and young people are kept up to date and reviewed if an accident or a significant event takes place. (NMS 26)