

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	David Morgan
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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

The unit is a ten-bedded residential short break service for children with a range of disabilities, including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism and complex health needs. Children usually attend three or four nights per month and currently 62 children receive a service. Funding is from the local authority and the health authority and nurses are always on duty. The site is in an urban area close to local amenities and facilities and has been open nearly three years.

The property is designed in two separate flats, which are very well resourced to meet the needs of the client-group. Bedrooms are individual and have a good amount of space for lifting equipment; some rooms have overhead tracking for hoists. All bedrooms have en-suite wet rooms, which include a shower, toilet, wash basin and grab rails.

One garden play area contains a tarmac track for quad bikes and a sensory garden. The second garden has outdoor play equipment for young people who enjoy more physical activities. Two mini-buses are available for trips.

Children who were on site during the afternoon and evening of the visit contributed to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This full unannounced inspection finds that the overall quality rating remains good. All areas of care are considered.

High standards of care are being maintained despite pressures on staff from budgetary constraints and temporary absences. Excellence is achieved in several areas, including the health and individual support provided to children and young people and the property itself.

Relatively minor safety issues are identified for attention as well as an administrative shortfall in recruitment. No actions or recommendations were made last time.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made last time.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people receive good attention to their dietary needs. There is close attention to any special needs. As befits a respite unit, the wishes of parents as well as children are closely followed. Children and young people who are fed through gastric tubes are integrated into sociable meal times and their needs are met discreetly. Meals themselves are of a high standard.

The health needs of children and young people more generally are given top priority too. There are qualified nurses on every shift. This means that even quite complex health needs are able to be met effectively. Excellence is shown by the results of audits, such as those for infection control and medication management, which are outstanding and the level of qualified health staff that are available. For example, in addition to the nurses on duty, health professionals such as physiotherapists are based in the same building and are therefore readily accessible. These factors contribute to a first class health service to children and young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and young people enjoy excellent levels of privacy, which are complimented by appropriate surveillance systems. The latter mean that staff can observe children and young people in communal areas but maintain a suitable distance when this is appropriate. Personal care is undertaken in their own bedrooms and children and young people benefit substantially from having individual en suite bathing facilities.

Children and young people are also thoroughly protected from risks such as bullying and being absent without authority; staff are also fully alert to indications of harm from other people. Similarly, staff are highly sensitive to any changes in the behaviour of children and young people, especially those with limited verbal skills. This means that children and young people's concerns are identified as soon as possible, however, there have been no complaints recently. The likelihood of either bullying or being absent without authority occurring are relatively low because of the organisation of the service in terms of the building and staffing. However, close attention is provided to the matching of children and young people, which ensures good standards are achieved.

Children and young people receive close individual attention to their behavioural needs and these are addressed well. All staff are suitably trained and employ patience and stamina in keeping children and young people productively occupied. Distraction and other techniques are effectively used to prevent difficulties from occurring or escalating. Also, the building itself is light and spacious, which helps to dissipate tensions. As a matter of routine practice punishments are not used. Physical interventions are used to guide children and young people but actual restraints are minimal. However, records of physical interventions are duplicated and not

countersigned by the manager. This has a low impact on children and young people but increases the potential risk of inaccurate recording and of insufficient reflection on incidents.

The property provides young people with good levels of physical safety and security. However, despite the comprehensive systems that are in place, there are a number of shortfalls that have potentially serious implications. The names of staff who attend drills are not recorded and therefore some staff do not undertake drills regularly. An external door is bolted but this is not agreed by the fire safety officer or shown on the risk assessment. If there is a fire, this arrangement slightly increases the risk to kitchen staff in particular. Procedures do not include the planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises, including the possibility that staff, children and young people would be unable to re-enter the building in the event of a fire or other crisis. Again, the likely impact of this on children and young people is small.

Although there is a thorough procedure for the selection and vetting of all new staff, there are some shortfalls in the records. There is incomplete evidence that the necessary recruitment processes occurred in every case. This is an important oversight in recording albeit with a low potential impact on children and young people in these particular circumstances.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Individual support is excellent. There is effective, integrated care of children and young people involving their families, schools and community services. Through close attention to individual children and young people and liaison with their families, staff have achieved detailed understanding of each person and can arrange help accordingly. Inter-agency collaboration means that the best possible outcomes are achieved, for example in terms of pain relief and feeding regimes. Individual needs are also addressed well through the matching of the groups that attend the unit. This means, for instance, that children and young people who attend the same school may attend together to maintain their social links, or those who are more able-bodied attend together so they can enjoy the same activities. It also means that some groups are particularly small despite the high demand for the service. This is a clear demonstration of the importance placed on meeting individual needs. The service also accommodates children and young people who are mentally able and adjusts the provision accordingly. It is also of credit to the organisation that the service is accepted amongst the Black and minority ethnic groups in the community. This is achieved, for example, through effective consultation and having an ethnically mixed staff team.

Children and young people only attend the unit for respite so the emphasis is on relaxation and fun. However, staff maintain good links with schools so that the care is as integrated as possible. Children and young people experience a wide range of activities both on and off site, most of which are also educational and encourage social and practical skills. As many community resources as possible are used and

staff ensure children and young people maintain a significant local profile. Outside activities include youth clubs, cinema and other events. On site every child and young person has their own box of toys and other items they can use during the stay; other activities are also available, including art and crafts and cooking. A sensory room allows children and young people to have quiet time too.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each child and young person has a high quality placement plan that is overseen by a key worker. These plans clearly show what targets are in place and how they will be achieved, for example regarding personal hygiene and mealtimes. The key issues are condensed into a summary document for ease of use, and this document is used regularly. Timescales reflect the abilities of the individuals and can be substantial. However, records show that significant improvements occur. Statutory and internal reviews ensure that targets are appropriate and that multi-agency work is as effective as possible. Staff consider that consultation with children and young people regarding their reviews continues to improve. Striving for improvement is a clear and important feature of the service. Independent reviewing officers also contribute to the high level of consultation. All staff are familiar with a variety of communication systems, such as the use of pictures and modelling, as well as each child's personal system.

All admissions are planned and the vast majority occur over a substantial amount of time during which effective links are established with families. Excellent practice is undertaken to ensure that admissions occur when children and young people are themselves confident enough to start. This good practice then extends into the ways in which children and young people are involved in decision making. These methods include consultations with their key workers, children and young people's meetings and family conferences. Everyday matters also routinely involve children and young people in making choices; this is undertaken carefully and sensitively and with as much repetition as necessary. The organisation itself also consults with children and young people periodically so they can influence the service.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

There are substantial and thorough preparations to support children and young people into their subsequent placements. Staff work closely with specific transition workers over several years to ensure as smooth a move as possible. Planning takes into account religious, racial, linguistic and cultural circumstances.

Young people enjoy an extremely high standard of accommodation providing excellent facilities for their use. There is a good standard of presentation too. Individual bedrooms with en suite facilities and tracking in some, mean that children and young people with a wide variety of needs can be accommodated in comfort.

There is a substantial range of different types of beds plus up-to-date bathing facilities. Areas such as the dining areas and lounges are domestic in style. Outside, the children and young people enjoy a variety of play equipment and covered areas, which is currently being improved further with a wheelchair swing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children and young people receive excellent attention to their individual needs and receive positive images and role models of their diverse community. This is reflected in their comprehensive personal records, which include electronic information that is integrated with social work records. Barriers to their inclusion are challenged by staff, and parents are supported and encouraged to achieve as much as possible too. The staff team is racially mixed and cultural events are acknowledged. The service is particularly effective in attracting children and young people from across the social spectrum.

The position on equality and diversity is also reflected in the up-to-date Statement of Purpose. A children and young person's guide, derived from the Statement of Purpose, is in place but in practice most understand the unit through their experiences. The principles behind the service are demonstrated by staff because they, in turn, are made familiar with the document through supervision meetings and discussions. Admissions and other managerial issues are adjusted so the service continues to operate within its Statement of Purpose.

Staffing levels are good overall despite the pressures created through financial constraints and the temporary absence of two senior members of staff. Rotas are adjusted to meet the needs of children and young people with part-time staff working extra hours if required. This also allows the high level of staff continuity necessary to meet the purpose of the unit. Staff display a high level of competence and commitment. They are well qualified and their training is up-to-date; they are also well supported through supervision meetings. High standards of staff training are facilitated by some staff being trainers themselves, for example for moving and handling, and by several senior staff having management qualifications. One-to-one care is well organised, for example through shift handovers and shift planning, and direct work with children and young people is excellent. Effective leadership is also demonstrated by the effective integration of health and social care teams and the awards that have been obtained.

There is a strong monitoring system in place. The organisation undertakes monthly monitoring, which is supplemented by effective monitoring by managers on site. File monitoring also occurs regularly as does monitoring of medication and other health-related matters. There is an extensive organisational structure available to support the service and the responsible individual who represents the organisation is based on site. This means the service is able to efficiently identify areas for improvement and is ready to adapt to future pressures. A current development plan is not in place

because the organisation is waiting to learn about the impact of the current national budget reductions.

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
26	ensure by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals that the persons working at the home, and so far as practicable, the children living there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire, by recording the names of staff in attendance (Regulation 32(1)(e))	14/02/2011
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to all new staff and that there is appropriate evidence on site. (Regulation 26(3)(d))	14/02/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure there are planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises, including fires, including the practical arrangements following an evacuation (NMS 26.4)
- ensure the local Fire Authority has been consulted about fire precaution measures and is consulted about alterations to the premises, with regard to bolts on an external door (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that the Registered Manager monitors and signs the home's records at least once a month, including the single physical intervention record. (NMS 33.1)