

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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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 home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children of either sex from 10 to 17 years old. Children and young people who use the home may have learning disabilities, physical disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

It is a purpose-built home specifically designed to accommodate children and young people with disabilities. Care is currently organised on a shared basis with some children and young people staying in the home during the week and going home to their families at the weekends. Others spend weekends at the home and live with their families during the week. On this basis the home is managed to provide a service to a higher number of families in need of support.

The home has gardens to the sides and rear where there is a range of outside play equipment that has been fixed onto a soft play surface. There is parking for staff and visitors and external close circuit security cameras in operation for security purposes.

In the home is a kitchen and dining room linked with a serving hatch. There are two lounges, one with a television and one with a music system and books. There is a central play area equipped with a range of toys and equipment. Leading off from this area is a sensory room and a soft playroom. There are six single bedrooms, each having a sink and vanity unit with lockable storage space.

There is one waking night staff on duty with a sleep-in staff member. There is a separate staff sleep-in room and office accommodation.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection to cover all the outcome areas below and check compliance with the good practice recommendation made at the last inspection.

The overall quality rating remains good. Care offered by the home ensures that children and young people's health, welfare and safety are effectively promoted and protected. There is a strong emphasis both on keeping children and young people safe and partnership working with their families and schools. The service is well managed and successful at providing positive outcomes for children and young people and in supporting their families. Parents, children and young people like the home and the support it provides them.

There are two recommendations aimed at improving the service as a result of this inspection identifying shortfalls in meeting national minimum standards. These are in relation to record keeping of risk management and staff training.

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been an improvement in access and use of suitable transport to take children and young people out on activities. This has impacted both on improving available staffing and allowing more flexibility in the provision of activities and leisure opportunities.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

As the care of children and young people is arranged on a shared basis their parents retain the overall responsibility and main role in promoting good health and healthy lifestyles. This is supported and enhanced by the arrangements in the home that contribute towards good outcomes for children and young people who use the service.

Children and young people's health needs are identified as part of the referral and assessment process used to determine which families receive a service from this setting. Care staff use this information effectively and work well with parents and a range of health professionals to promote and safeguard the health of children and young people. This helps ensure that children and young people receive good support to access a wide range of health services for treatment or guidance about their specific individual health needs. For example: healthy diets are promoted; there are regular health checks; staff will help maintain regular appointments with dentists and opticians; there is specialist help with epilepsy, speech and language development, emotional development; and use of medication is regularly reviewed.

Staff promote healthy eating and support children and young people to make healthy choices about their diets. Food provided is generally wholesome, healthy and nutritious. Diverse needs based on culture and preference are catered to. Due to their autism and background some children and young people have a very limited diet but staff regularly encourage these individuals, with some success to try a wider range of healthier foods. Individual dietary intake is monitored well as a means to help ensure healthy eating.

Staff are trained in first aid and safe administration of medication to provide help if there are any accidents and help ensure children and young people have their medication at the right times. Medicines are stored safely and securely, procedures are thorough, administration records are well kept and effectively monitored. This ensures safe practice and identifies any necessary improvements for benefits of children and young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a strong emphasis with regards to keeping children and young people safe, effective care practice ensures good outcomes for them.

The experience and skills of staff ensure high standards of care and keep children and young people safe, well supervised, protected from going missing and free from bullying at the home. Staff receive safeguarding and anti-bullying training and know what to do to keep children and young people safe if there are any allegations or suspicions of abuse. There are good levels of individual support to help promote personal safety.

There is a suitable complaints process and staff respond well to children and young people's concerns as they arise. Children and young people benefit from having their privacy respected, personal care is provided discreetly and sensitively. Personal information is kept confidential and meetings can be held in private.

There is good practice with regard to promoting positive socially acceptable behaviour that is sensitive to children and young people's individual needs. Staff interact well with children and young people providing them with plenty of opportunities for play, learning and development. There is close supervision with firm but fair boundaries to help children and young people respond well to expectations of acceptable behaviour and help keep them free from being bullied.

Staff have developed effective individual strategies, avoiding institutional interventions, for each child and young person to help resolve any aggressive, unacceptable behaviour. As a last resort, approved physical interventions are used to protect the safety of young people. This is rarely needed, which reflects the good practice staff use and positive outcomes for children and young people regarding their development and improvements in behaviour.

The home is well maintained and provides good physical safety and security. Written risk assessments are recorded, to enable staff to know what action to take, to minimise the risk to each child and young person from their individual behaviours, risks from the physical environment and from activities. These were not available for all individuals who stay at the home but staff were aware of appropriate action to take to keep all children and young people safe. This inconsistency in record keeping practice was not judged to have effected the safety of children and young people on this occasion.

Children and young people benefit from low staff turnover, staff are familiar and knowledgeable about their needs. There is careful recruitment of any new staff including necessary checks to make sure only those who are safe and suitable work in the home. Similarly, visitors are checked and monitored to also ensure the safety of young people in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good levels of individual support for children and young people based on their needs, circumstances and backgrounds. This is reflected in positive comments from parents for example, 'he is settled and well cared for, we could not ask for much more'. There is a nurturing and consistent approach to the provision of care that benefits children and young people who stay at the home and like the structure and familiarity it offers.

Children and young people have written plans identifying how their needs will be supported by the service. Staff are knowledgeable about each individual, their needs and how to support them. There is good communication with children and young people using a variety of non-verbal techniques including, signs, pictures and symbols. Staff have well developed links with specialist agencies and social care professionals for additional support which helps to provide children and young people with good outcomes and opportunities for development, decision making and independence.

Education is promoted well and staff help children and young people to maintain very good attendance at school. As with health care, parents retain overall responsibility for education. Staff support this through good communication with schools and parents to help ensure continuity and consistency of care between school, parents and care staff. There is space, resources and facilities at the home to help young people with their educational progress.

Staff provide a wide range of activities for children and young people to benefit from. There is better provision of private transport avoiding the need for staff to collect and return vehicles from other parts of the city. This is an improvement since the last inspection and benefits children and young people by providing more opportunities to go out. Within the home there is also a good range of facilities which children and young people like to use. For example there is a sensory room, a large well-equipped play room with a full screen television, two lounges and outdoor play equipment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for helping children and young people contribute positively to their care and decisions made about their lives. This starts when their holistic care needs are assessed as part of the referral and assessment process. This helps ensure there are well-planned admissions, sensitive to the needs of children and young people. They and their families are able to visit the home several times, including overnight stays to gradually become familiar with the home and what the service offers.

Both the needs of children and young people being offered a service and those who

already use the home are taken into account to help make sure individuals are appropriately placed at the home. There are two groups of children and young people who alternate staying at the home, one group during the week and one at weekends. This allows flexibility when offering a service to someone new and there is additional flexibility allowing a child or young person to change the days they stay at the home.

Assessment information is used to write individual plans of care. These are implemented in practice, to provide children and young people with the support they need to ensure their health, welfare and safety are promoted and protected. Children and young people and their families' views of their care needs are responded to well and care plans are regularly updated to reflect individual achievements and development.

As care is on a shared basis children and young people regularly stay with their families who are also welcome to visit at the home. There is a strong emphasis on working together to support families for the benefit of children and young people who come to stay at the home.

Staff support children and young people well to help them make decisions about their care, daily lives and free time. Children and young people have good relationships with staff and like coming to stay at the home. Staff are caring, treat children and young people with respect, promote their individuality and independence.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff support children and young people based on their needs and abilities to make choices and develop their independence. Appropriate, realistic targets are set with individuals which staff will endeavour to help them reach. Targets are part of each child and young person's care plan and once achieved plans will be updated and individuals supported to progress further. As a result children and young people have various opportunities to develop their self help and personal care skills, life and social skills and their confidence.

Young people are supported to stay at the home until the age of 18 or an appropriate adult service is found to meet their needs. Links with other agencies help ensure necessary transition plans are in place which take into account the needs and wishes of individual young people and their families.

The home is situated in a quiet residential area. Children and young people benefit from good quality accommodation, décor, and furnishings. There is a pleasant homely environment and a wide range of facilities that meet children and young people's needs well. There is a large central play area that is child friendly and has plenty of toys and equipment to play with. Leading off this is a sensory room and soft play area that children and young people like to use. The home has disabled

access and a good range of disability and specialist equipment to support the needs of children and young people with physical disabilities and special needs. There are single bedrooms which are personalised to meet the preferences and needs of children and young people using them.

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Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is good management practice focussed on ensuring the home is run in the best interests of children and young people who stay there.

There is detailed information about the home and what it provides for children and young people, their parents and social workers. This is available in a user-friendly version for the benefit of children and young people with communication difficulties. Staff will also help explain this guide to them helping them know what to expect from the home.

There is a competent and experienced staff group with clear deputising arrangements in the manager's absence. Nearly all staff have the recommended qualification or higher, to care for children and young people. There are suitable staffing levels to support young people with their care, activities, visits and appointments. All staff have opportunities to train in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects including equality and diversity. An ongoing programme of refresher training is provided in a range of subjects, to maintain the staff's competency to meet the needs of children and young people. Records of staff training were not fully up to date which makes it harder to plan and assess staff training needs. On this occasion this was not judged to have impacted on outcomes for children and young people.

There are good monitoring and quality assurance systems in place which have been developed since the last inspection to include key performance indicators. These are aimed at reviewing and improving the quality of care and outcomes children and young people experience when they stay at the home. This is supported by a detailed development plan with clear objectives to improve what the service offers to children and young people. Additionally this helps keep the Registered Manager and provider accountable for the management and performance of the home. There are regular visits to the home on behalf of the registered provider to provide frequent reports about the quality of care. Copies of these are sent to Ofsted to allow for further monitoring of the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children and young people receive good care that reflects their needs, backgrounds and individuality. Staff have been trained in diversity and practice is focussed on ensuring diversity is promoted well. Children and young people receive good support to access universal and specialist health, education and other services to meet their specific needs. Records are in

good order, reflect the individuality of children and young people and clearly show their needs, how they are supported, their achievements and development

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure there are written risk assessments (including identifying action to be taken to reduce risks to an acceptable level) reviewed regularly in relation to children's known and likely activities, the potential for bullying and abuse within or outside the home and where applicable the impact of emergency admissions for both the admitted child and existing child group (NMS 26.2)
- ensure there is an up to date written record, maintained in the home of all training for all staff. (NMS 31.4)