

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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Date of last inspection	20 March 2009
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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 provide care, accommodation and education for up to 26 boys and girls from eight years old up to 17 years old. The home offers a specialised service to children and young people with autism.

The home has a range of accommodation. There are three flats with four bedrooms and two flats with six bedrooms. There are also two one-bedroom independent flats for young people who can enjoy a more independent lifestyle.

Each flat has a lounge and spacious kitchen diner. Some bedrooms are en-suite and are supplemented with additional bathrooms.

The home benefits from a wide range of leisure and education facilities on site. These include a school, home cinema, bistro, games room, sports hall, gym, hydrotherapy pool, five a side football pitch, horticultural facilities, a craft room, sensory room, library and information technology suite.

There is also a playing field, gardens and parking space.

Summary

This was a key inspection to check on all key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people. This is a satisfactory service with some good and outstanding features. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and their good health is well promoted. Privacy is very well facilitated in all aspects. Complaints are handled appropriately. There are good child protection policies and procedures, which helps to safeguard the welfare of the young people. Education and leisure needs are very well met and the home works closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Placement planning is good and it is well recorded and reviewed. Staff are experienced, well trained and competent. However, there are medication administration errors and aspects of the behaviour management policy and practice are excessive and unreasonable. There is unsatisfactory monitoring of these matters.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Person was asked to make improvements to behaviour management practice and quality assurance monitoring.

The provider carries out unannounced monitoring visits to the home. This is to ensure that the care of children can be adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Action points are identified to be followed up by the manager. However, the welfare and behaviour management issues raised in this report have not been identified and reported upon. The manager maintains a discrete system for monitoring and improving the quality of care provided in the home. However, this system is not effective enough to identify and adequately address the welfare and safety issues raised in this report.

A recommendation was made to ensure that a minimum ratio of 80 per cent of all care staff complete a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The service continues to provide good support and opportunities for staff to achieve this qualification but the target remains unmet.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's individual health and intimate care needs are identified as part of the admission process. This ensures that young people's well-being and health is actively promoted. The home has access to a qualified school nurse with specific responsibility for promoting health.

The staff team have a very good understanding of what makes up a good balanced diet. Menu planning is influenced by young people and integrates culturally appropriate food and encourages people to try new dishes. A horticultural area is used for young people to help with growing vegetables, which are incorporated into the menu planning.

Policies and procedures are in place for the safe storage and administration of medication. Staff receive training in the safe handling and administration of medication. However, there are recording errors and the medication records are not adequately monitored. This could compromise the health and well-being of the young people. Staff follow the guidance in relation to the use of household remedies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff demonstrate good understanding of facilitating privacy for the young people. This is done sensitively and safely. Staff confirm that they are able to speak and make telephone calls in private and details about young people's care are recorded and stored appropriately, to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. Young people have access to a private telephone. Visiting families and friends can have the use of a visitor's suite which can also be used for overnight stays.

All staff have received training on complaints to ensure that they know what to do if a person complains about the service. There is information in the young people's guide about how to complain. Staff enable young people to complain through support or advocacy. There is no independent advocacy service available to the young people. The manager stated that this is an area for development. The complaints procedure is supported by a clear and thorough recording system. Therefore, complaints are satisfactorily handled.

The managers and staff have all received child protection training, although some are in need of refresher training. The provider has a good safeguarding procedure for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the young people's safety. Therefore, the welfare of young people is promoted, they are protected from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absence and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

The sanctions policy is good, promoting the use of praise, encouragement and de-escalation of behaviours. The policy reflects the age, understanding and individual needs of the young people concerned. Therefore, young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. Physical restraint is occasionally used to manage behaviour where no other alternative exists. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and practices. Physical restraint records contain the required details. However, the young people's liberty is restricted by the home's policy of routinely locking both internal and peripheral doors to keep young people in the home. This constant, routine practice is an excessive and unreasonable method of control. An action has been raised to cease this practice immediately. The provider presented a number of theoretically acceptable alternative measures which they intend to implement.

Written risk assessments are recorded to enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each young person during their known and likely activities. However, some of those recorded are not dated or they support the unacceptable practice of routinely locking the internal and peripheral doors.

All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire drills. All staff working at the home have received up to date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. The fire safety check records are up to date and accurate. Therefore, young people's physical safety from fire in the home is adequately protected.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and they have undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The young people receive very good personalised support appropriate to their needs. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care and education of young people. The provider commissions services to fit the young people's needs. The staff appreciate that the individual young people have a range of needs arising from diversity. All staff have received training around equality and diversity. They demonstrate a good appreciation of the need to promote difference and they attempt to enable the young people to do the same.

Education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and young people are well prepared for the school day. Education at the school is good. However, not all young people have an up to date statement of special educational needs. Young people learn about diversity there through personal health and social education subjects. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes. Therefore, the education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood.

Specialist workers are employed to plan, develop and deliver a programme of events that encourages individual interests, play and activities. Examples highlighted includes canoeing, trampoline, arts and crafts, photography, music and instruments, football, rugby, swimming, walking and use of a sports hall. Young people's involvement is enthusiastically supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very

good links and relationships with community based activity providers. There is also a good range of books, toys, DVDs and games available for learning and entertainment. Therefore, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and they are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned and to take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. Admissions to the home are planned and the child or young person and their family where appropriate are involved in the planning. Young people may visit the home before they move in. Therefore, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Good quality placement plans have been developed. These are supported by the use of health care plans, behaviour management plans, life, social and leisure plans, communication plans, activity plans, daily routines, personal care guidelines and contact plans. The plans are clearly written in a person centred style. Staff describe the plans as, 'Brilliant' and confirm that they know what action is required of them to meet the needs of the young people. The daily records reflect the content of the care plans and show the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person. These are supplemented by a photograph and description file that documents young people's activities and achievements. Therefore, young people have their needs assessed effectively and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met and how they are implemented.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the children and young people at the home. Statutory case reviews have taken place within the required timescales. This ensures that the young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home.

Young people's contact is promoted and facilitated. Staff confirm that young people can keep in touch with people that are important to them and that they can have family come to visit them. A family suite is available to facilitate visits and overnight stays.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the home is run. This includes key worker sessions and day to day consultation. Examples of young people's views being actioned includes food, items of furniture, colours, bedding and activities. Therefore, young people's views are sought and acted upon.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are taught day to day life skills according to their level of maturity and understanding.

They learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, handling money and completing life learning objectives. They are also given guidance and support with social skills, laundry, clothing care and cleaning. Young people can access the

horticultural area, where they help to grow vegetables that are included in the menus. The on site cinema and bistro enables young people to gain confidence and experience, which they can transfer to venues away from the home. This aspect of the provision is a notable area of outstanding strength. Transition planning is very well promoted and recorded. Staff describe the process as very good. Therefore, young people receive care which helps to prepare them for adulthood.

The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment and any damage is repaired promptly. The outdoor play areas are very well equipped, well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A statement of purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a very good children's guide to the statement of purpose. It is available in a variety of formats. Before admission, the staff provide as much information as they can about the home to young people, so that they know what to expect if they come to live there.

There is a consistent staff team which has been added to recently, to fill vacancies and to broaden the range of skills and experience amongst its members. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Staff supervision is good and it is supported by reflective practice coaching.

New members of staff receive very good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. The organisation's induction training programme is a notable area of strength. Staff describe it as, 'Brilliant'. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of training is provided, which builds upon staff's existing knowledge and specialisms to enhance the staff's competency to meet the needs of the young people. The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and qualified to meet their needs. However, the target of 80 per cent of staff having achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People has not yet been met.

An internal checking system is maintained to monitor the welfare of the children and young people in the home. Monthly audits are undertaken by the manager and unannounced monthly monitoring visits are carried out by the provider. A report of the findings is produced. This should ensure that the care of children and young people is adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Both systems have failed to identify the welfare and safeguarding concerns raised in this report, for example, medication administration errors and the routine restriction of young people's liberty. Therefore, the provider has not taken appropriate measures to safeguard the welfare of the children and young people.

Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and they are arranged in a manner which makes them readily accessible to staff. Young people are supported to access their file contents.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Examples of less than good practice are in areas such as individual risk management, advocacy on complaints due to age and understanding and children's individual rights.

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
13	make suitable arrangements for the safe administration and recording of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21)	10 July 2009
22	ensure that no measure of control or restraint is excessive or unreasonable (Regulation 17)	10 July 2009
26	identify, and so far as possible eliminate unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children accommodated in the home (Regulation 23)	10 July 2009
14	ensure that where appropriate, each child has an up to date copy of any statement of special educational needs maintained in relation to the child under section 324 of the Education Act 1996 (a) with details of any such needs (Regulation 28, Schedule 3)	1 September 2009
32	undertake effective monitoring of the standard of care in the home (Regulation 33)	3 August 2009
33	maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34).	3 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that 80 per cent of the staff team achieve the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent (NMS 29)
- establish and maintain a system for ensuring that all staff, including waking night staff receive safeguarding children refresher training at appropriate intervals (NMS 17.8)
- ensure that written risk assessments are dated to enable effective reviewing and monitoring (NMS 26)
- consider the provision of an independent advocacy service to enable people other than the child to make complaints on behalf of the child (NMS 16.3)

- review the content of the statement of purpose to ensure that it does not advocate the use of excessive or unreasonable methods of control and restraint (NMS 1).