

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC361789
Inspection date	2 September 2009
Inspector	Chris Passmore
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	21 January 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 registered children's home provides residential assessments for children with complex individual needs. Primarily it provides for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders though other disabilities including physical disabilities, can form part of the complexity of needs. The assessment period can last up to 24 months following which the child may return home with a support package or transfer to appropriate longer term placement. If the latter course is taken then the assessment period will be followed by a further period of accommodation whilst transition arrangements are put into place. The service is also designed to accommodate children in crisis, in which case their stay should be much shorter.

Summary

This was a short notice inspection of the service that took place towards the end of the school summer holidays. At the time of inspection there were three young people living at the home through the summer period. The home had also accommodated other children and young people within its remit on a short breaks basis. This service was not intended to provide long term care for children and young people and there had previously been criticism that there were no clear exit plans for the young people accommodated. This was not the case at this inspection as all three had plans for their futures, some more advanced than others. The service continues to provide a stimulating and safe environment for the young people living there. Documented and pictorial records show young people having had varied and creative programmes of activities and visits throughout the summer months. Staff support young people and their family both at the service premises and through elements of outreach work in their homes.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The service has responded to the actions and recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to aspects of the environment and safety of those using the service as well as arrangements for the transitioning of children following the completion of their assessment period. Improvements made include clearer arrangements for parking and the provision of a well marked and safe pedestrian walkway from the car park to the premises. The service provider has implemented their full transition service with the outcome that two of the three young people now have well advanced plans for the next stage of their lives and plans for the third young person are well in hand. There have been improvements to previous systems which have enhanced the monitoring of standards of care being delivered and the support and supervision available to staff as part of their ongoing professional development and appraisal.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home promotes the health and welfare of young people and encourages them to live healthy lifestyles. Individual health care needs are well documented and supported by appropriate community health services. Staff are skilled in providing general first aid care and management of particular health conditions. Children have plenty of opportunities for healthy outdoor activity through regular trips and outings from the home and the service has shared use of specialist equipment, facilities and adventure play areas with its immediate neighbours. When

children are naturally less inclined towards activity they are still encouraged to take regular exercise and mobilise through the use of creative outings and known preferences. Catering arrangements at the home similarly reflect children's individual preferences whilst providing varied, balanced, healthy meals which children like. Catering services have been inspected by food safety professionals from the District Authority and scored well against statutory regulations. The appointment of an enthusiastic catering supervisor has released care staff time and importantly promotes healthy eating through creative menu planning in consultation with young people and their key workers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The service promotes the welfare of children and young people and safeguards them through good practice and underpinning procedures. Because of the complexity of needs displayed by this group of young people the staffing levels are necessarily high and therefore so is the supervision of young people. Staff know the individual needs, state of development and behaviour patterns of young people very well. Staff provide children and young people with appropriate personal space whilst maintaining visual contact and deal sensitively with intimate personal care situations.

There are procedures and strategies in place for issues such as countering bullying, absconding and complaints but they are little used in practice. If parents have complaints or concerns about the care of their children they take these issues direct to the manager of the unit. Most recorded issues have been low level concerns which have been resolved locally and in line with the service provider's general complaints policy. More serious complaints or concerns are processed through the complaints manager for the service provider.

Behaviour management is very individually assessed and strategies developed and reviewed in line with individual young people's response to these. There are appropriate arrangements in place for the use of physical interventions when required and these are accurately recorded in a purpose designed log. All behaviour related records are recorded for analysis as part of the ongoing improvements to the monitoring of standards of care within the home. Sanctions are little used but where they are used they are with the agreement of the placing authority and parents. In certain cases this includes curtailment of contact visits and whilst agreements exist these instances do not appear in the sanctions record. They are, however, clearly recorded in case notes.

The general safety of the building and its environment, inside and outside is well managed through delegation. Records show all mains services have been maintained satisfactorily by professional contractors and there are good in-house procedures for testing and maintaining alarm systems. Staff recruitment is undertaken centrally by the service provider and their recruitment practice was inspected separately and judged to be good. There is some use of agency staff but because of the nature of the service and needs of the young people only a few agency staff have the appropriate skills and training to undertake these duties. Agency staff are vetted by their employing body and these checks are verified and record when agency staff first report for a shift.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The nature of this service requires children have individual staff support in order to fulfil the assessment process and successfully transition onto the next stage. Young people have allocated key staff but receive care from across the staff group as an important part of their development and to relieve staff from extremes of attachments. The service supports young people to maintain their education by working closely with the adjacent school and education staff. There are regular exchanges of information between the school and the service and the home's staff attend education reviews as far as possible. The young people have plenty of opportunities for social interaction and staff encourage them to try new or different events as part of their experiential learning. Individual likes and dislikes are well known by staff and often used as an incentive to activity, exercise or a new experience. During the summer holidays the children and young people receiving care at the service have benefited from outings and activities arranged by staff on a daily basis. Some of these have required meticulous planning and risk assessment in order to achieve successfully.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are full records of assessment in place for the young people and agreed care plans for their time at the service. Reviews of placement plans and Child in Care reviews have taken place in a timely way and staff from the service make contemporaneous notes of agreed action points arising from these. In most cases formal review notes are posted to the home and on the provider's electronic database reasonably quickly but there was one example of an extended delay which demonstrated the importance of the key worker's notes from the meeting. In addition to reviews there are records of transition planning meetings taking place and agreed outcomes for young people being put into action. The service works closely with family members to maintain free and regular contact arrangements for the young people. These arrangements are very individual and reflect changing circumstances in either the family or the young person. All such arrangements are negotiated between the service, family members and the caseworker.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

This service is about assessing children and young people's complex needs and with other professionals, preparing the most suitable package of follow-on care to meet their needs. In respect of assessment the service has honed its skills and adapted to the challenges of meeting individual needs. It was lacking professional support for the task of post-assessment transition but this has now been addressed and young people have more positive outcomes in as much as there are clear exit plans for their immediate future needs.

The service provision is purpose built and well equipped to meet the diversity of needs presented by the children and young people it has cared for. Staff have made creative use of the space the home offers as a result of low numbers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation and management of the service continues to be good and promotes the welfare of young people and staff. There have been improvements to the way staff are given ongoing professional supervision and development through the introduction of observed practice sessions. These then form part of the integral supervision structure. Monitoring of

standards includes various checks and balances as well as reflective discussion at management and team levels. Staff training has been maintained at core level with limited opportunities for additional training as a result of the restructuring of the overall service provider organisation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff have received training from the provider. The organisation is sensitive to the individuality of each of the young people using the services. Staff take the views of parents into account and consult with children and young people in so far as they are able. Young people are encouraged to achieve to the level of their own potential whatever their level of disability.

The staff team has proven strengths in caring for children and young people with complex individual needs. Records and photographs show staff enabling children and young people to have a range of experiences and enjoy normal activities for their age groups within a safe and nurturing structure.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the log books are formatted according to the recommended standards and their content is comprehensive in its cover (NMS 22.10)