

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Chris Passmore
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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 registered children's home has provided residential assessments for children with complex individual needs. The service could also accommodate children in crisis, in which case their stay should be much shorter. Primarily it provides care for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders though other disabilities, including physical disabilities, can form part of the complexity of needs. Following an assessment period the child may return home with a support package or transfer to an appropriate longer term placement. If the latter was appropriate then the assessment period would be followed by a further period of accommodation whilst transition arrangements were put into place. The service is currently subject to a provider led review and is likely to move away from its assessment role towards a multiple use residential facility for children and young people with complex individual needs.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a short notice announced inspection of this local authority children's home. The inspection was a full inspection against the key national minimum standards for children's homes.

The overall outcome of this inspection is that this is a good service with some outstanding elements.

In particular this home's strength is in its ability to identify individual complexities of need and to put in place plans of care to address these. Staff work very closely with other professionals from health, education, psychiatric and psychological services to coordinate appropriate care and feedback on progress. Staff are very experienced in caring for these young people, work well as a team and receive appropriate training opportunities.

Although actual residential numbers are low, the range and complexity of needs being cared for are vastly diverse. Staff meet these challenges with enthusiasm and commitment despite suffering frequent adverse reactions and setbacks.

There are positive outcomes for the young people receiving care. Several have successfully transitioned into adult care while others make good progress towards a better quality of individual life. Staff work closely with allied professionals and family members. Both groups contributed to the inspection findings through questionnaires or email comments. Both were equally respectful of the professional service given by the home and appreciated the individual progress made by the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made as a result of the last visit.

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 provide general first aid care and management of particular health conditions.

Young people have plenty of opportunities for physical activity through regular trips and outings from the home and the use of indoor exercise equipment. The home benefits from the shared use of specialist equipment, facilities and adventure play areas with its immediate neighbours.

Catering arrangements at the home reflect young people's individual preferences while providing varied, balanced, healthy meals which they like. Catering services are inspected by food safety professionals from the District Authority and care staff hold food safety certificates. The position of catering supervisor has only recently been recruited and the home is still waiting for that person to start.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home safeguards and promotes the welfare of young people well through good practice and underpinning procedures. The complexity of needs surrounding the young people require high staffing levels. There is therefore close supervision of young people. Staff know the individual needs, state of development and behaviour patterns of young people very well. They provide young people with appropriate personal space while maintaining visual contact and deal sensitively with intimate personal care situations.

There are procedures and strategies in place to cover countering bullying, absence without authority and complaints but they are little used in practice. 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 individually assessed and strategies developed are reviewed in line with individual young people's response to these. This is a continuous process. 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 analysed as part of the ongoing

monitoring of standards of care within the home.

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 and services.

Staff appointment is undertaken through the service provider's recruitment and human resources teams and records retained centrally. A separate inspection of the recruitment process and a sample of personnel records took place on 10 September 2010 and judged to be good. This service does use agency staff to cover substantive staff absences and delays in recruitment. Agency staff are vetted by their employing body and these checks are verified and recorded when agency staff first report for a shift.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The nature of this service requires young people to have highly individualised staff support in order to fulfil their care needs. Young people are allocated to key staff but receive care from across the staff group. This is as an important part of their development and helps to relieve staff from extremes of attachments. Parents and professionals alike value the effort the staff put into making each young person's life as varied and positive as possible.

Staff support young people to maintain their education by working closely with the schools they attend. There are regular exchanges of information between the schools and the home and care staff attend education and statutory reviews. Much of the practice that contributes to managing behaviour and improving communication is collaborative work between staff from the home and the schools the young people attend.

There are plenty of opportunities for young people to have social interaction with adults and peer groups. Staff encourage young people to try a variety of 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 young people benefited from outings and activities arranged by staff on a daily basis. These included adventure experiences such as surfing and camping. Many of these have required meticulous planning and risk assessment in order to achieve successfully.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are full records in place for the young people together with agreed care plans. Reviews of placement plans and statutory care reviews take place in a timely way.

and staff from the home contribute reports and attend these reviews. In cases sampled formal review notes are in individual files and on the provider's electronic database system. This enables staff and managers to quickly respond to changes in the care plan and to monitor individual development. 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 easy 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. Allied professionals have commented on the way staff at the home work cooperatively with them and parents in order to maintain an information exchange. Parents have also expressed how much they value the services provided by the staff and appreciate the resulting developments in their children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home always works to the levels of individual ability. Therefore the amount of preparation for adulthood that can be achieved is very subjective. This does not hinder staff from using opportunities to introduce young people to everyday life skills and experiences. This may be a basic awareness of others to more complex skills such as shopping.

The home is arranged around three wings of accommodation. Each young person has their own bedroom and may share the communal accommodation with one or more other young people. Where required wings are populated on an sole-individual basis. Young people are admitted to the home on the basis of need and compatibility therefore the home is likely to run at a level below its registered number. There is a central kitchen where most meals are prepared together with a small kitchenette on one wing. Each wing has its own arrangement of communal areas plus there is a further communal area at the front of the home. The building is purpose built and fitted out to a good level of provision to accommodate a range of disabilities and needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation and management of the service is good. It promotes the welfare of young people and staff. 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, but appropriate opportunities for additional training. Staff commented that they found these training sessions very useful. Once they have received training they cascade their knowledge down through the wider staff group.

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.