

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC387684
Inspection date	5 June 2009
Inspector	Peter Daniel
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	19 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

The home is a residential home for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The home has accommodation for six children/young people aged 12 to 17 years, of either gender. It is able to offer placements to young people with associated complex needs, such as epilepsy, autism or challenging behaviours. The home can offer planned, emergency and respite placements. The home is conveniently situated for rail and bus routes and is within walking distance of local shops. It is a detached property with its own secluded private gardens.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection. The home opened recently and is still in the process of developing its service. The home is meeting the majority of the National Minimum Standards. At the time of the inspection, the home had insufficient staff to run an effective rota. The situation has not compromised the standard of care offered to the one young person in the home. The home has now recruited three more staff who will start within three weeks. This will allow the home to accept more referrals. The staff currently in post are competent and experienced and are offering child-centred care. The home has effective child protection systems and other procedures in place. The young person gave positive feedback and reported that the home is fully meeting his needs and safeguarding his best interests.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home opened at the end of March. It is still in the process of establishing its staff group and its intake of service users.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home successfully promotes the health needs of its service users.

Young people undergo annual medical checks and annual health assessments and attend appointments with a general practitioner, dentist and optician as appropriate. Young people's emotional needs are also addressed and they are referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services as appropriate.

The home provides a healthy, balanced diet, including fresh fruit and vegetables. The menu is ethnically and culturally sensitive. Young people are appreciative of the food prepared at the home. Young people are also encouraged to take part in exercise and outdoor activities.

The home has systems for administering medication and staff complete a medication chart. Staff have done first aid training.

The home keeps a health plan that records children/young people's health needs, medical history and medical checks.

The home also carries out weekly health and safety checks of the structural side of the building that highlight any risks to the premises.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home safeguards the welfare of children/young people. There are effective procedures for safeguarding, responding to allegations, admissions, methods of control, physical restraint, whistle blowing and complaints. The home undertakes risk assessments for each young person. The home has proper reporting procedures for notifying and reporting incidents under Schedule 5.

The home has robust recruitment procedures and there is careful selection and vetting of staff. Staff records show up to date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, references and qualifications. The home is using a risk assessment framework for portability of CRB checks, as advised by Ofsted.

Staff have undertaken child protection training and restraint training in the last two months.

Staff provide consistent care and control and assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff, based on mutual respect. The home operates a rewards and sanctions policy. Since the home opened, there have been no allegations of abuse or unauthorised absences. Staff have not yet had to use any sanctions or restraints. There have been a number of critical incidents, all caused by the same young person.

Young people know how to complain. There have, so far, been no complaints.

The home provides physical safety and security. Positive steps are taken to keep young people safe from fire and other hazards. The home undertakes appropriate fire checks on a regular basis. A recommendation has been included to carry out a night fire drill.

Children are afforded privacy within their bedrooms. Children's files and records are confidentially stored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home's aim is to actively promote the education of young people. Those not in mainstream education are offered alternative provision. The home deploys an education tutor for young people not attending school. Tutoring is tailored to the young person's learning needs and includes life skills teaching. It also covers basic literacy and numeracy as part of the curriculum where this is appropriate.

Young people take part in leisure and recreational activities, including swimming, shopping, visits to local parks and outings. The young people are individually supported by a key worker who encourages participation in the above.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are assessed and reviewed regularly. Young people attend their own reviews. They are encouraged to have constructive contact with family and friends. They may visit home or family members are invited to visit the placement. Young people can also phone home. Young people are supported to make decisions about their lives and influence the way the home is run. In addition to attending their own reviews, they attend a residents' meeting where there is the opportunity to put forward views and make decisions about the way the home is run. The agenda covers the weekly menu and discussions about the day to day issues within the home. Young people reported that they feel they are being 'listened to'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home prepares young people for independent living and adulthood. They are taught independent living skills, such as doing the laundry, ironing, cooking, shopping, tidying their bedrooms, and budgeting and saving. They are also supported in doing the Pathway Plan. Young people are referred to Connexions for advice on employment. A tour of the building and bedrooms showed evidence that the home is well suited to its needs and is newly furnished to a high standard.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home opened at the end of March. It has a Statement of Purpose which is relevant to its client group and service. The staff group is competent and experienced. The staff structure is as follows: a Registered Manager who has the Registered Manager's Award and a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3; a Deputy Manager who has a NVQ at level 4 and the Registered Managers Award; and four Residential Support Workers. Three of these posts were vacant at the time of the inspection - see later. The current Residential Social Worker has a Certificate in Counselling Studies at level 3. He will start training for a NVQ at level 3 in July. There is one bank worker who works across the organisation.

The current vacancy situation has been an issue. There have been insufficient numbers of staff to run an effective rota. At least another two or three staff are needed to produce a rota. The Manager and Deputy Manager and the Residential Social Worker have virtually been managing the rota between them. They have been doing twice as many hours as contracted for and are doing 16 hour shifts. The home is not set up to accept additional referrals until more staff are recruited. The management have addressed the vacancy situation and have recruited three more staff, two of whom will be in post within two weeks. An action has nevertheless been included to ensure that the home has sufficient staff.

There is one young person with learning difficulties in the placement. The inspection was satisfied that the staffing situation has not impacted on the young person, whose needs are being fully met. The home has maintained a minimum of two staff on shift during the day and at night. Until new staff are in post, problems would arise if the home increased its intake of young people. Management has given assurances that the home will not take on any new young people unless sufficient staff are in post. If necessary, the home will use bank or agency staff.

Staff are supported by management. The manager supervises the Deputy Manager who in turn supervises the Residential Social Worker. Staff have to date been offered formal supervision about once every eight weeks. Some supervision sessions have had to be cancelled as a result

of staff cover being needed. A recommendation has been included to ensure that staff working in the home receive at least one and a half hours supervision each month.

The staff's qualifications are outlined above. Staff are also expected to attend in-service training. There is a training programme that identifies mandatory training in child protection, restraint, first aid, food hygiene and fire safety. Staff have undertaken child protection training and restraint training within the past two months. The organisation has obtained the workbooks for CWDC induction and staff will start imminently. The home is monitoring its practice and has started Regulation 33 reports.

Children's files are in reasonable order and include a front sheet, placement plan, health plan, risk assessment, daily and weekly record sheet, monthly progress report, key worker report and Looked After Review. It is recommended that files should also include admissions/referral form and education details.

Records are securely maintained.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This issue is linked to the number of staff. The organisation has made additional appointments who, when in post, will increase the diversity of the staff group. At present the home is meeting the diversity needs of the young people in the home.

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
30	ensure that staff are sufficient in number, experience and qualification to meet the needs of children and young people - NMS 30, Regulation 25	31 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff working in the home receive at least one and a half hours supervision each month - NMS 28.2
- ensure that young people's file records include an admission/referral form and education details - NMS 35.2
- ensure an emergency evacuation drill is held at night time in case of fire -NMS 26.8