

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Seka Graovac
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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 service is owned and managed by a limited company. It is fully funded by a local authority for the exclusive use by families and children who live in this inner city borough. It is a respite service for children and young people from seven to 17 years old who have a disability. This includes children with emotional or behavioural difficulties, physical and learning disabilities, sensory and communication impairment and those who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The home is registered for looking after eight children at any time. Its stated mission is to reach the largest number of children with special needs and their families with the most warm, loving, dynamic and unique service. Children come for weekend breaks term-time and longer stays during school holidays, on an agreed rolling basis. The same children also attend an after-school activity club at the home. In addition to its children's services, the home also provides support for a group of minority ethnic mothers of children with disabilities. The building has two floors that are connected by a lift and a staircase. The premises are designed and equipped to address the special needs of children and young people with disabilities. Although all areas of the home are accessible to wheelchair users, the home does not offer services for more than three wheelchair users at any time. The home has a mini bus with a tail-lift and limited parking facilities at the back of the house.

At the time of the inspection, five children with complex needs were using the service. The observations of the children's interactions and their non-verbal communication with the staff and the inspector contributed to the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection. It had two main aims: to follow up on the actions and the recommendation made at the last inspection and to reassess the quality of the safeguarding.

The main outcome of this inspection is that the service is satisfactory. Children are contented and enjoy using the service. The safeguarding of children is sound. Although many good practices are in place, the shortfalls relating to record keeping undermine the communication, monitoring and the overall quality of the service. For example, none of the risk assessments are recorded. This includes risks associated with individual children, activities and premises. Sanctions are not recorded either. The records of physical interventions are not detailed enough. Some entries in the restraint book have also raised questions about the appropriateness of some physical interventions used. Accidents are inconsistently recorded. Those shortfalls in record keeping compromise the quality of the service provided.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection was carried out in July 2010. It was a full inspection. The quality of the service was judged as good. However, the manager was asked to make all required records available on children's file. This includes any statement of children's educational needs and every school report. The manager was also asked to make appropriate records of any measure of control, restraint or discipline used. It was also recommended that in collaboration with the commissioning authority, pathway or transition plans are developed and implemented for young people preparing to leave the service.

The manager appropriately liaised with the local authority to address the above shortfalls. Copies of the statements of children's educational needs, the individual learning plans and the school progress reports have been obtained. These records contribute to better information sharing and consistency of the support provided. Copies of the young people's pathway or transition plans are still not available on their files. This recommendation is repeated.

Staff have started to record physical interventions in a bound book specifically kept for that purpose. However, despite the manager's monitoring of the records, they are not detailed enough. For example, the type of the intervention used, the time, location and duration of the restraint are not always recorded. It is also not always clear which staff members held the child. The action is repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Robust staff recruitment procedure ensures that only people suitable to work with children are employed to work in this service. This protects children well.

Staff have access to policies and procedures that promote good practice as described in the national minimum standards. The written guidance appropriately promotes children's privacy and confidentiality and good practice when dealing with complaints, safeguarding concerns, bullying, challenging behaviour and children being absent without authority. Staff receive regular training in child protection, behaviour management and other subjects relevant for providing care to children with complex needs. The good training opportunities and clear written guidance contribute to the staff's ability to appropriately safeguard and promote children's rights and welfare.

The service provides a physically safe and emotionally nurturing environment. The health and safety arrangements are satisfactory. Regular checks are carried out to ensure that the environment is safe. However, apart from a fire risk assessment, no other risk assessments in relation to the premises have been recorded. There are other examples that show that the service is not taking the formal risk assessment process seriously. The service cannot demonstrate that any of the wide range of activities children engage in, have been risk assessed. None of the five children who went shopping on the day of the inspection, had their individual needs formally risk assessed. The staff know children well and are able to keep them safe. However, the lack of the structured formal risk assessments in relation to individual children, activities and premises undermines good communication and consistency of practice.

The review of the records of children being restrained, raised questions about the appropriateness of some physical interventions used by staff. For example, on some occasions it was recorded that staff members held the child's wrists. The manager commented that this was a shortfall in recording and that the practice was different. However, the service was unable to demonstrate that this issue was raised and how the poor record keeping or inappropriate practice were challenged.

Staff use sanctions without realising that they are sanctions, for example, when a child is not allowed to watch their favourite television programme, because they continue to misbehave despite the warnings given. Due to a lack of staff and management's understanding of sanctions, sanctions are not appropriately recorded and monitored.

Accidents are inconsistently recorded. For example, the log of incidents also contained information about a number of instances when staff members or children got injured through an accident. These accidents were not logged into the accident book. The record of the actions following a child sustaining a head injury, were not complete. According to the manager, much more was done than it was recorded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
22	review the physical interventions used in the home and ensure that an appropriately detailed and accurate record is made of any restraint used (Regulation 17)	22/01/2011
22	keep a detailed record of any sanctions used, in a volume specifically kept for that purpose (Regulation 17)	01/03/2011
7	record significant risks that are relevant and necessary for each child to negotiate their place in the community, to ensure that the home promotes children's welfare (Regulation 11.(1)(a))	01/03/2011
26	record risk assessments in relation to the premises and grounds to ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety (Regulation 23.(a))	31/03/2011
26	record risk assessments in relation to any activities in which children participate so that they are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks. (Regulation 23.(b))	31/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- develop and implement pathway or transition plans for each young person with disabilities and special educational needs, in collaboration with the commissioning

- authority (NMS 6)
- improve the record keeping relating to accidents and subsequent actions taken. (NMS 12)