

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC397293
Inspection date	4 February 2010
Inspector	Chris Fuller
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	2 September 2009
--------------------------------	------------------

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 children's home cares for up to five young people of both sexes aged between 11 and up to 18 years of age who are diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum and/or having learning disabilities. These young people are unable to live with their families due to the complexity of their diagnoses. The communal space in the home offers a range of leisure and recreational rooms and outdoor space in a secure rear garden. It is located on a residential estate next to a local park.

Summary

The unannounced full inspection monitored the key national minimum standards in the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation. There are no previous actions or recommendations as this is the first key inspection of the home. The overall judgement in this report is based on the standards inspected within the relevant Every Child Matters outcome groups.

The overall quality rating for this setting is satisfactory. The inspection found that the home is making steady progress in establishing a sound framework for the provision of the service. Young people are well supported by the management and staff who have worked extremely hard to achieve positive outcomes and progress for young people.

One action and five recommendations have been set as a result of this visit. These relate to recording of physical interventions, recording of personal information, making notifications, the Statement of Purpose and staffing arrangements.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the children's home since registration in September 2009.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people's health and dietary needs are very clearly identified and well met. Staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge of young people's individual preferences such as particular tastes or textures. The cook is well qualified and experienced in providing a wide range of healthy nutritious meals through well-balanced menus. In addition, the staff are supported by a catering manager who monitors all health and safety aspects and the quality of practice in the kitchen. The kitchen is very clean and tidy although it is furnished to catering rather than domestic standards, with stainless steel design for equipment and facilities.

Staff are creative in the use of the dining area to enable young people to be involved safely in making drinks, food preparation and serving up at the hatch and work top area of the kitchen. Young people can access refreshments in the dining room and where appropriate, assist with laying tables. This is a pleasant, spacious, light room where young people are supported by staff to enjoy mealtimes as a social occasion.

The staff have produced clear detailed health care plans for young people based on information from a range of comprehensive assessments of their health care needs. All young people are registered with the local doctor and other local health services. Particular support has been provided by the looked after children (LAC) nurse, who has established links with specialists for young people with autism, such as dentists and opticians. Staff work closely with the LAC nurse regarding the young people's sexual needs and to support young people with their personal care and hygiene issues. This helps young people establish very good routines for regular health care checks at local health services. The management recognise that the young people have very complex health care needs; experienced nursing and care staff from other children's residential services provide additional support to ensure the health care needs of young people are met. Staff consistently promote healthy lifestyle choices in daily routines, personal care, exercise and activities.

There are excellent health care facilities within the home; there is a dedicated medication room where all medication and first aid is securely and safely stored and administered. Staff are trained in the safe handling and administration of medication and understand the correct procedures to follow. A designated person on each shift is responsible for the safe administration of medication. There are clear formats for the medication administration sheets and all are completed appropriately. A risk assessment sheet is completed for all young people and regularly reviewed. There is thorough monitoring of medication administration and recording. In addition, all staff have undertaken a four-day first aid course about children and young people, which included information about epilepsy. These good practices contribute to ensuring the health and well-being of young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are aware of the individual needs of young people and make every effort to maintain their personal space, belongings and privacy at all times. However, sometimes personal information is written on the white board in the staff office, which does not maintain the privacy and dignity of young people.

Young people are enabled to make their feelings known and to express their views or concerns through effective formal and informal communication systems, including contact with external independent people or agencies. The management promote open contact with families, who can call at any time. An independent visitor is appointed for young people who have no or limited family contact. The participation officer is developing strategies to involve and consult young people with disabilities and autism. The complaints received by the home from external parties have been investigated and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.

The home has policies and procedures for all safeguarding practices in respect of child protection, countering bullying and the absence of a child without authority. All staff receive basic safeguarding training. In addition, the management provide a workshop with use of a computerised program that provides information about the protection of disabled young people. This means that the staff group share a common knowledge base and can develop strategies to address the specific needs of the young people.

There is a clear anti-bullying policy and promotion of anti-oppressive practice, with due consideration of culture, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability. The staff complete risk

assessments for each young person and agree strategies to address oppressive or aggressive behaviour to ensure all young people are safe and protected.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the action to take if a young person goes missing or runs off. They were able to give examples of a few instances which highlighted the need for close supervision or additional staffing levels for particular activities or daily routines for some young people. There is a protocol with the local police, who have visited the home and are aware of the potential vulnerability of the young people.

There is an established system in place to notify the persons and appropriate authorities of significant events. However, this does not appear to be fully implemented as not all of the records of notifications were held in the home. In addition, the home does not always provide adequate notification of significant events to all relevant persons and agencies in a timely manner. Management and staff were unclear about the process for notifications.

The home has a child-centred ethos with a strong emphasis on providing a firm structure and daily routines, which have been missing from many young people's lives. The staff provide a framework of care and education to address the complex needs sometimes evidenced in young people's volatile and challenging behaviour. All staff received training in strategies for crisis intervention and prevention during their induction and prior to the home opening. The home has a wide range of individual behaviour management strategies and reviews these to ensure they remain purposeful and meaningful. Staff are very observant and are quick to recognise changes in behaviour. This enables them to effectively implement agreed strategies or elicit the support of colleagues. There are few occasions when sanctions are given and staff always make sure the young person understands why these are made and records their views about the sanction and whether it was effective. Staff focus on positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour to promote young people's understanding and development. However, where there are instances of physical intervention, the records of restraints are sometimes incomplete. They do not always provide full details of the date and context of the physical intervention. This means it may not be possible to track the incident and monitor the suitability of the action taken.

The home has maintained the high standards of all the health and safety requirements since the registration of the premises. A comprehensive range of risk assessments has been completed and due consideration given to the impact on young people, for example, consultation with the fire service regarding the use of fire alarms due to young people's sensitivity to sound. Staff receive training in safe working topics. Young people are kept safe through daily demonstration and instruction by staff about health and safety strategies.

The home has an established and effective system for the vetting and supervision of visitors. The management have an extremely thorough and comprehensive system for the recruitment of suitable staff to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The young people are given high levels of individual support in all aspects of their identified needs and wishes. Specialist community and local services are accessed that have knowledge, specific skills or facilities to meet the needs of young people with autism, for example, dentists, opticians and education. The staff have produced 'passports' which include 'all about me'

documents for each young person, and which inform personalised care packages. These have been developed from relevant personal information sourced from young people and their parents/carers. Staff are aware of the religious and cultural backgrounds of the young people and give these due consideration. This is reflected in the provision of daily care to young people, such as personal care needs and diet.

The home effectively supports and enables young people to learn and develop. All children and young people attend the same school. The home is working closely with school staff to complement its behavioural programmes, communication systems and training methods. The staff aim to promote consistency and reinforce learning for young people within the home environment. This is achieved through checking daily planners for education topics/activities and direct communication with the school. Staff celebrate and reward all achievements of the young people. Staff attend school meetings and events. All young people are provided with a wide range of learning opportunities, and a variety of resources are available within the home. Young people have settled well in the school and are making good progress in their learning and development.

Young people are encouraged to be involved in leisure activities and develop their personal skills and abilities. There is a good range of facilities for leisure and activities in the home, such as the sensory room, arts and crafts room, soft play room and outdoor garden with swing and play equipment. Staff produce effective individual programmes to promote young people's learning, confidence and self-esteem through education projects and activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All admissions are planned well; there is a clear referral process involving early contact with children and families, and introductory visits are made to the home. Staff clearly outline the individual needs and wishes of the young people in detailed placement plans. Each young person has a key worker to ensure focus is given to promoting their placement plan so that their needs will be met.

Young people's plans are based on the comprehensive assessment of their individual needs and wishes and are regularly reviewed and updated. Daily logs and young people's records clearly evidence the good progress young people have made since moving in and settling in the home.

Staff and families work closely with young people to ensure their views and wishes are represented at the time of the review and fully considered during decision making about plans for their future. Activity booklets are produced for each young person. These consist of photos of the various activities and daily experiences of young people, such as tricycle riding, pizza making, soft play room, art work, relaxing in the sensory room, dressing up, making snowmen, and roller skating. These can be used at reviews to demonstrate the progress of young people and some aspects of their care.

Staff support and nurture positive relationships with relatives, friends and placing authority staff through regular contact and sharing of information. The home promotes all contact with families to build and extend existing relationships. Staff provide support and supervision onsite at all times. Staff assist children to write and send letters, sometimes using picture formats, to maintain contact. This is especially valued by families at birthdays and festival times. In addition,

management consider providing support for a child to go with their family on holiday or other activities.

Young people's wishes and feelings are consistently sought and recorded through staff observations and shared discussion. Their needs and wishes are taken into full consideration when plans are reviewed for the operation and running of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff support and encourage young people to develop personal and social skills. Young people have a pathway plan on file which specifies the support and assistance they will need for semi-independent or independent living. These are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs of the young person. Young people are supported to take part in the daily household tasks, such as preparation of drinks and snacks, personal care and tidying their own rooms. Young people have made good progress in a relatively short period of time at the home in respect of their personal care and making choices about leisure time and activities. Staff enable the young people to access local services such as swimming pools, libraries and banks. The staff work well in partnership with other agencies to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

The children's home is a purpose-built detached property with a secure rear garden and grounds with car park spaces. It is well maintained and there are good facilities and resources. There is a high standard of provision throughout, with good quality design, fabrics and furnishings. The premises are in a suitable location with generous space allowances for both the exterior and interior. The staff and young people are settling in well and beginning to make good use of the space and facilities to maximise the benefits for young people and personalise their individual rooms. The home is located in a residential area; this makes for easy access to a range of community facilities and resources for health, education, recreation and leisure. The space, facilities and grounds meet the requirements for accommodation and provide a safe secure environment for young people with autism.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of young people, particularly in relation to personal, social and cultural issues, are addressed well. This is demonstrated, for example, through the promotion of communication and consultation skills, the development of individual 'passports' and the wide range of learning and development opportunities for young people.

The Statement of Purpose generally covers the home's functions and facilities and the service it provides. However, the criterion for age group does not accurately reflect the registration condition. The children's guide is in the form of a welcome booklet. This has been produced in different formats so that it gives very clear useful information for young people.

Staff are well supported through individual supervision and a strong management team, who are available and approachable. There are regular staff meetings where staff openly express their views. Staff demonstrate a dedicated and professional approach in working with each other and the young people to maintain the quality of care provision.

Staff are encouraged and supported to attain qualifications. More than half of the staff have National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 in childcare while others are enrolled and completing this training. Management were proactive in providing a comprehensive programme of training for staff prior to opening the home, to ensure all staff had the appropriate knowledge and skills. This staff training also provided an opportunity for team building and to standardise their care practice. Staff continue to attend training to achieve and maintain competency in their care practice.

The young people benefit from the individual care provided by a dedicated, permanent staff group. The home provides a basic number of staff on each shift. However, there are staffing shortfalls in personal care support at peak times, and nursing care. The home is well supported by senior management who facilitate additional staff to address these periods. While these temporary arrangements make a significant impact on the quality of health care and safe caring practice in the home, they highlight the shortfall in the staffing complement. Staffing numbers are increased following a risk assessment of the needs of the young people and activities or daily routines to provide individual care for young people. Staff are flexible in their working routines and demonstrate a commitment to providing consistent, stable care in a safe, secure, stimulating environment for young people.

The home is monitored in all aspects of service delivery, and appropriate action is taken to maintain the quality of care within the home. The manager completes regular monthly monitoring of the systems and practice in the home. Records are signed and dated and any issues for action are recorded and reported in staff team meetings and supervision.

Young people's records are held securely and confidentially and cover all matters required in the regulations. Young people's files are well organised with a clear file index and dividers which are colour co-ordinated to young people's room and locker colours. Formats such as the 'passport' for young people, home-school diaries and strip cards for the picture exchange communication system are used to improve information recording and sharing with young people. Young people make good progress because of the effective management systems that are in place.

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
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure, the date, time and location of, the use of the measure, and of any other person present. (Regulation 17(4)(b)(d))	28 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled (NMS 9.0)
- ensures there is a system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30 including where appropriate the parents of the child (NMS 20.1)
- ensure a written record is kept which includes details of the action taken, and the outcome of any action or investigation, following notifiable events (NMS 20.3)
- ensure the home has a written Statement of Purpose which accurately describes what the home sets out to do for children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided, including the age criterion of the young people accommodated (NMS 1.1)
- ensure the staffing arrangements also take into consideration children's ethnic and cultural backgrounds and any disabilities they may have such as health care needs. (NMS 30.8)