

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Chris Fuller
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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

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 diagnosis. 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 overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

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 was one action and five recommendations set at the previous inspection visit.

The inspection found that the home has addressed all of the previous requirements. This has been an extremely difficult and challenging year for a new service with changes in management and insufficient staffing levels. The provider has been proactive in making temporary arrangements to provide cover and support while recruiting to management and staff posts. A dedicated core staff group endeavour to maintain consistency and stability so that young people continue to receive good quality care. Young people are well supported by the management and staff who work very hard to enable them to achieve positive outcomes.

Three actions and four recommendations have been set as a result of this visit. These relate to kitchen safety, staffing levels, appointment of a registered manager, the staffing policy, supervision of staff and staff appraisals respectively.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were one action and five recommendations made at the last inspection. Management have taken appropriate action to ensure all of these have been addressed in respect of recording of physical interventions, recording of personal information, making notifications, the Statement of Purpose and staffing arrangements. Management regularly monitor and sign records of restraint to identify any issues. Personal information relating to young people is held in their individual files and is no longer written on the wall mounted white board in the main office. Guidelines for making Schedule 5 notifications are clearly displayed and accessible to staff. Notification is made in a timely manner and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the process. Temporary arrangements have been made to

address staffing issues and further actions have been made in respect of this issue. The Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the age group of young people cared for as stated in the registration certificate of the service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people's health and dietary needs are very clearly identified and met. Menu planning is of a good quality, includes food from different cultures, caters for children and young people's dietary restrictions and requirements and encourages them to try new dishes. Staff have good knowledge about eating disorders and difficulties with eating and liaise well with any professionals helping young people with such difficulties. Mealtimes are usually agreeable, social occasions where an enjoyable relaxed atmosphere is provided.

Young people have extremely complex health care needs and these are given high priority by staff so that their health and welfare is promoted at all times. Staff produce clear detailed health care plans for young people based on comprehensive assessments of their health care needs. Young people are well supported to establish good routines for regular health care checks at local health services. Young people have good access to specialist advisors about their health needs. Staff are very knowledgeable and observant of changes to a young person's health and works closely with them to identify any health needs they might have. Staff provide a range of indoor and outdoor activities to engage young people in physical exercise and activities. Staff consistently promote healthy lifestyle choices in daily routines, personal care, exercise and activities.

Young people's health needs are met and protected by effective medication policies, procedures and practice guidance which are implemented well. There are excellent facilities with a designated medication room for safe secure storage of medication and facilities as a treatment room for the administration of medication to young people. Staff are trained in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid and understand the correct procedures to follow. Medication records are up to date and accurate. Quality assurance records show that the provider often checks whether medication policies, procedures and practice guidance are put into practice effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The privacy and dignity of young people is respected and their views are given full consideration. The individual needs of young people are given the highest priority and staff make every effort to maintain their personal space, belongings and privacy at all times.

Young people are well supported to raise any concerns. Staff use a range of

communication skills and resources including formal and informal communication systems so that young people can express their views. All young people have access to independent people or agencies with whom they can raise issues.

The safeguarding practice is effective and supported by a range of policies, procedures and staff training. There are effective networking systems in place which means staff work closely with other agencies such as police, health and education to safeguard the health and welfare of young people. Young people's safety is taken very seriously and the management take appropriate action to address any issues raised to secure their safety and welfare. All relevant person's are notified including Ofsted, social workers and the families of young people.

Staff promote anti-oppressive practice with due consideration of culture, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability. Policies and practice about bullying deal with issues such as insults, physical intimidation and harmful language or behaviour. Staff are vigilant in monitoring any changes in mood and behaviour which may indicated distress and are very observant of the group dynamics within the home. Young people are encouraged to let staff know if they experience bullying and there are people both in and outside the home they can approach.

There are individualised risk assessments and plans for what to do should each young person go missing. The plans describe what action is taken; including who is to be notified. The management are pro-active in providing sufficient staffing to ensure constant support and supervision of young people so that they are always aware of their whereabouts. Staff have a clear procedure for reporting a young person to the police should they go missing so that action can be taken immediately to safeguard their welfare.

This has been an extremely difficult and challenging period for management, staff and young people due to a considerable number of changes in management and staffing. Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention is used as a last resort. Staff develop behaviour management strategies based on individual risk assessments to make sure young people are safe. These are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain purposeful and effective. More recently a full assessment has been completed by a specialist team to provide support and guidance to staff in managing the most challenging behaviour. As a result some new resources and strategies are being implemented which reflect the individual needs of young people.

Young people are kept safe through daily demonstration and guidance relating to health and safety issues. Staff know the home's fire procedures and regularly engage the young people in fire drills at different times of the day and night, so that they are familiar with what happens. Generally, staff all receive fire safety instruction when they arrive at the children's home. Fire records are available and fire safety equipment is checked in accordance with fire safety guidance. Similarly, staff follow first aid procedures taking appropriate action to seek medical attention for any injury so that the health and welfare of young people is protected.

The home has an established and effective system for the vetting and supervision of visitors. The processes for recording the recruitment of suitable staff to work with young people have been updated and placed on electronic systems. This means management can request recruitment information which is current, comprehensive and ensures that adults working with the young people are suitable to do so.

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. Staff access a wide range of specialist community and local services that have knowledge, specific skills or facilities to meet the needs of young people with autism. For example, dentists, opticians and education. Young people have individual 'passports' which include their 'all about me' information creating personalised care packages. These are developed from relevant personal information sourced from young people and their parents/carers and regularly reviewed and updated. Staff receive training in equality and diversity and demonstrate their awareness of the importance of the religious and cultural backgrounds of the young people and give these due consideration. Staff develop useful links with community services such as local religious centres that welcome involvement of young people and their carers. Young people's personal care needs are very well addressed by staff who have considerable insight into the personal preferences likes and dislikes. Young people are constantly consulted about their daily care needs as staff consistently engage with them and encourage them to make choices.

The home effectively supports the learning and development of young people. All young people have a personal education plan or statement of educational needs on file. These are regularly reviewed so that their learning and development targets are clearly identified. Staff network effectively with school staff sharing information and supporting educational activities and events. Young people benefit from well informed staff who are able to reinforce key learning skills and enhance their knowledge and abilities. Educational professionals value the input of staff and support provided to facilitate school attendance, punctuality and participation in school curriculum and projects. There are excellent facilities within the home to promote learning skills including computer facilities and programmes. Staff develop very effective individual programmes, to promote learning, confidence and self esteem of young people, through education projects and activities.

Young people are encouraged to participate in leisure activities and to develop personal hobbies or interests. The home has an extensive range of resources and facilities for play, sensory stimulation and relaxation. There are also soft play areas, outdoor games, exercise and arts and craft work. One young person states, 'I like lots of exercise, swimming, playing on my roller blades and scooter.' Another said, 'I enjoy music and watching DVD's.' Young people each have their favourites and are encouraged by staff to widen their experiences and explore new skills in safe controlled environments with suitably qualified specialists.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All placements were extremely well planned with full involvement and consultation with young people and their families. Staff very clearly outline the individual needs and wishes of the young people in detailed placement plans. Key workers actively promote all outcome areas so that good progress is made to meet the individual needs of young people.

Young people's plans are based on the comprehensive assessment of their individual needs and wishes and are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff demonstrate considerable insight regarding young people with autism and develop specialist skills and very good knowledge for meeting their needs. They successfully engage young people in making choices ensuring young people's views and preferences contribute to the review process so that they or their representatives participate in decision making about plans for their future.

Contact agreements and records are clearly recorded on individual files of young people. Staff support and nurture positive relationships with relatives, friends and placing authority staff to maintain social contacts in the wider community. Staff facilitate and support home visits and routinely update and share information with parents and relatives where this is agreed. Young people's sense of self and family is reaffirmed through a wide range of mediums including life-story books, photos and all about me books.

The management organised excellent consultation with families and children in preparation for transition to the purpose built premises. Staff involved them in planning regarding equipment, decoration and furnishings for building and the name of the home. Young people were introduced slowly to the group and able to familiarise themselves with their surroundings. Young people are supported by staff throughout the process of transition to adult services. Parents are fully consulted and involved in this process. Staff are supportive and facilitate visits and provide reassurance to young people so that they build their confidence for moving on.

Staff are constantly creative in finding ways to enhance communication with young people so that they are able to express their views and have the opportunity to make choices. Young people are consistently and regularly consulted, formally and informally regarding their needs and wishes and supported to make choices about their daily lives and routines in the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff support and encourage young people to develop personal and social skills. Young people are very well supported to take part in the daily tasks and routines,

such as, shopping, preparation of meals and tidying their own rooms. Staff enable young people to access local services and access specialist help and support where this is necessary. Young people and their families are well supported so that they can explore their options and make a smooth transition to adult services. The staff work very well in partnership with other agencies to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

The children's home is a purpose built detached property in its own grounds. It is well maintained and there are excellent facilities and resources. Young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their own rooms and enjoy all areas of the home. The home is located in an area with easy access to a range of community facilities and resources for health, education, recreation and leisure. The space, facilities and grounds fully meets the requirements for accommodation and provide a safe secure environment for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of young people are addressed well, regarding personal, social and cultural issues. This is demonstrated, for example, through personal care arrangements, staff training and meeting the individual care needs of young people in terms of their culture and background. For example, the multi-cultural staff team help each other to understand the needs of individual young people in a greater depth; they also celebrate different culture events by having themed nights at the home.

The Statement of Purpose has been revised to clearly state the age groups of young people accommodated. However, the staffing policy does not fully state the arrangements for staffing of the home nor does it accurately reflect the current levels of staffing required to meet the needs of the young people. 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.

A system for staff supervision has been implemented. However, due to a series of changes in management, staffing shortages and absence supervision of staff has become irregular at best and some staff have not received supervision since June 2010. Similarly, new staff are not receiving fortnightly supervision to support them in their role and responsibilities. This means staff are not sufficiently supported by management through individual supervision. The management of the home has changed three times during the past inspection period resulting at times in restricted availability of management. The staff appraisals have not been completed for staff which means staff learning and development needs have not been identified or the quality of service delivery assessed.

The majority of the staff have National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 in childcare. New staff without qualifications are enrolled and completing this training on satisfactory completion of their probationary period. Staff completed a

comprehensive programme including induction and foundation training prior to opening of the home so that all staff had the appropriate knowledge and skills. Staff attend updates in safe working practice and specific child carer related training to achieve and maintain competency in their care practice.

There is generally, an adequate number of staff on each shift to provide care for young people. The service has acknowledged the lack of sufficient staffing within the staff team numbers to meet the needs of the young people. The senior management have been pro-active and redeployed staff from another home for children with disabilities so that a skilled experienced workforce is provided with some level of consistency for the young people. However, this has continued for a prolonged period of time and there continue to be staff vacancies with increasing levels of strain on the existing staff group and on the young people living in the home. The staff are committed to providing a safe, secure, stimulating environment for young people and will often work additional hours to provide the necessary cover. Young people benefit from the individual care provided by a dedicated core staff group.

The home is monitored in all aspects of service delivery and action is taken to address any issues identified and maintain quality of care within the home. The management complete regular monthly monitoring of the systems and practice in the home. Records are signed and dated and constructive criticism is fed back in staff team meetings. The registered manager resigned from the service in September 2010 and an acting manager is currently in post. Management have recruited a new manager who is awaiting clearance to be appointed. This means the home does not currently have a registered manager in post.

Young people's records are held secure and kept confidential and cover all matters required in the regulations. The staff effectively use a wide range of formats such as the 'passport' for young people, home-school diaries and strip cards for the picture exchange communication system to improve information recording and sharing with young people.

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
26	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))	08/10/2010
30	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably	10/12/2010

	qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1)(a))	
34	The registered provider shall appoint an individual to manager the children's home. (Regulation 7 (1))	10/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the staffing policy is adequate to meet the home's Statement of Purpose. The home's staffing is sufficient in practice to meet the needs of the children accommodated (NMS 30.2)
- ensure that all staff and others working in the home receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that all new staff receive one to one supervision at least fortnightly during the first six months of their employment (NMS 28.2)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually by their line manager. (NMS28.7)