Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC399222
Inspection date	28/09/2011
Inspector	Keith Riley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/03/2011

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements
Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a service that is run by the local authority providing care and support in a purpose-built facility for up to three children with severe learning disability.

The aim of the home is to provide an intensive level of social and educational care for children with complex needs. The nature of the service means that a majority of placements will be short- to medium-term in duration ranging from approximately one year to 18 months. There is a multi-disciplinary staff team including clinical psychologists and occupational therapists. Education forms a strong part of any placement with teaching facilities on site; tuition is provided via an outreach programme as part of an agreement with a local specialised school.

The Registered Manager is also responsible for another home in close proximity.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Children were present during some of the inspection. They engage in a variety of activities inside and outside the home. Children are able to communicate their needs to staff who are attuned to their particular method of communication. Children's individual needs are met including the re-integration into a school environment.

Children are safe in the home. Children were safely evacuated when a fire occurred in the kitchen. Some records, that were retrieved from the fire, were being stored in a garden shed. They were relocated to more secure storage during the inspection. The kitchen is currently not functional.

Staff show have safeguarding training and show a good understanding of safeguarding issues. However, refresher training is currently only planned once every two years. Procedures, such as completion of all relevant information on body maps, are not always followed robustly.

Children and staff experience positive relationships. Staff are sensitive to the needs and abilities of children and respect their privacy and dignity. Children live in a safe and pleasant home that is generally well maintained. Some minor shortfalls were identified at inspection that do not have a significant impact on the good quality of care being delivered.

There is a good medication policy and procedure in place and staff have received training. However, the medication cabinet is no longer suitable for the current needs of the children accommodated in the home. Management are aware of the issues

and taking corrective action.

Although the placing authorities understand the aims and purpose of the home the Statement of Purpose does not contain all the matters listed in Schedule 1 of the regulations.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
21 (2001)	ensure there are suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safe keeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home, in particular prescribed creams (Regulation 21 (1))	31/10/2011
28 (2001)	ensure records specified in Schedule 3 are kept securely in the children's home, in particular any special dietary needs (Regulation 28 (3) (a))	31/10/2011
31 (2001)	ensure the provision of suitable kitchen facilities for use by staff and, where appropriate, by children accommodated in the home (Regulation 31 (3))	31/10/2011
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose consists of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 4 (1))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are aware of and alert to any signs or symptoms that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm, in particular when completing body maps (NMS 4.3)
- consider reviewing the frequency of training in appropriate safe-care practice including training specifically on issues affecting disabled children (NMS 4.6)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children's psychological, physical and health needs are met. They have the best possible care and support through staff engaging with a variety of other professionals. Children benefit from individualised and specialist support that is provided through closely working in partnership with a clinical psychologist. Behaviours are analysed meticulously, such as what time of day they occur, and practice is informed. Consequently, outcomes for children have significantly improved due to the support provided to them. Children who have struggled to access the community benefit from having opportunities to take part in positive activities, such as local parks, theatres and swimming. Staff, parents and professionals speak positively of the outcomes.

Children who struggle with change because of their disability have their anxiety minimised through good autism-specific practice. There are good outcomes from well- thought out transition plans. Staff plan strategies to meet the needs of each individual over an extended period of time. These include visits to school placements being built up gradually while staff support is slowly replaced with school staff support. As a result, children's anxiety and potentially challenging behaviour is minimised. Currently children who have been excluded from school previously are accessing school education. They are extremely well supported to make the transition from home to school. Staff commitment and sensitivity ensures that they have access to prompt support within their educational placement if required.

Support plans are under constant review to ensure the best possible outcomes. Clear targets in care plans are followed through in daily living, helping children make good progress in their development of independent living skills at their own pace, for example, brushing their own teeth. Children are learning practical tasks depending on their age and ability, such as putting their own laundry in the washing machine. Parents say, '…. has shown there is a better future for my son, that he can learn and develop new skills with the right input'. Children are receiving good levels of support and nurturing from a staff team who know their strengths and vulnerabilities.

Children's privacy and dignity are protected using individual risk assessments addressing specific issues. Staff are sensitive to the needs and abilities of children. All necessary consents are on file, such as permission to administer medication and first aid when necessary. Their sexual identity is handled sensitively by staff who have a good understanding of the issues.

Children benefit from good levels of contact with their families and people who are important to them. Contact is fully facilitated by care staff, who support individuals to receive visitors or have home visits. Children are showing reduced levels of anxiety and, as a result, are able to spend more time at home with parents.

Children experience a very positive approach to encouraging them and enabling them to lead healthy lifestyles. Physical activity is promoted and they are given a choice from a varied and healthy menu.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Children are well cared for by staff who know them very well and how to keep them safe without limiting their free choice or liberty. Particular vulnerabilities, antecedents and triggers are identified in the care plan. Staff demonstrate good knowledge of the care plans unique to each individual including the positive behaviour strategies to be used. Behaviour management strategies, such as distraction techniques and de-escalation, mean that physical intervention is minimal. Children benefit from staff who are aware of the group dynamics and the effect any presenting behaviours have on others staying in the home.

Staff are supported well in their work with children by a range of professionals including a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and clinical psychologist. Children's anxiety is minimised through the proactive and preventative support offered by a competent staff team working effectively with others. Staff speak positively of the support and guidance they receive that reduces incidents for children.

Staff are trained in medication handling and there is a clear policy in place. However, the medication cabinet is no longer suitable for the current needs of the children accommodated in the home. One cream identified for disposal had not been returned to the pharmacist and one cream was not locked in the cabinet. Management systems in place had identified the issues and plans were already in place to correct this shortfall.

Care plans include the educational achievement of children and how well the targets are being met. Staff show a strong commitment to support children who are having difficulty accessing school due to their disability. The aim of the home to reintegrate children from on-site education into special needs schools is currently successful. Staff have a good understanding of the broad range of needs of children on the autistic spectrum and with severe learning disabilities. The staff team maintain a good balance of being supportive and approachable to the children and of maintaining appropriate boundaries to ensure that the children feel safe when going to school. Any issues are addressed by the staff in conjunction with the school.

Children benefit from an allocated key worker who ensures that monthly summaries are completed. Placement plans are reviewed regularly and, as a result, the most up-to-date needs of children are highlighted in the care plan. Children who have various degrees of communication difficulties understand what service the home provides through a children's guide produced in a format to meet their individual communication needs.

Children live in a supportive and nurturing environment. Their views are taken into account in the day-to-day running of the home and the longer term planning of their care. Staff are inventive in their approach, such as seeking children's opinions through a 'listen to me' workbook in addition to the daily monitoring of needs. Children readily make their personal preferences and choices known, through the consistent use of alternative communication systems, such as picture exchanges or

photographs. They are able to choose what they want to do and express their mood. As a result, children are developing social skills as well as making their needs known.

Relationships between the children and members of staff are friendly and relaxed. There is a culture of promoting children' rights. Staff empower children through their open and transparent ways of working. Children have not had to make a complaint. They are cared for by staff who understand their needs.

Children have their own bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Their bedrooms reflect their interests and contain personal items of their choosing. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle. Children are learning to understand the nutritional value of eating a good diet. Children choose their own menus and have the opportunity to appreciate different cultures.

Health and safety systems are effective and ensure that children, staff and visitors are kept safe from risks and hazards. The home is generally well maintained and physically secure. Children are not currently able to access full kitchen facilities as the kitchen was damaged in a fire. However, there are clear plans in place to refurbish this. Some minor shortfalls were identified in other areas of the home, such as minor repairs to a wall, weeds in the play area and a broken storage shed.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **satisfactory** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children are safe in the home. Children were safely evacuated when a fire occurred in the kitchen. A sound contingency plan is in place which helped to minimise children's anxiety and distress. Children were able to return to the home after a short period of respite for a few days in a nearby home. Effective fire precautions means that, although the kitchen has to be refurbished, the rest of the home is preserved.

Regular health and safety systems are in place. This ensures that children, staff and visitors are kept safe from risks and hazards. External engineers ensure gas, electric and fire systems are working and are safe. Children have safe and easy access to those parts of the home and garden they need.

Staff have an adequate understanding of safeguarding procedures in order that they can appropriately respond to any signs or allegations of abuse. Parents and social workers say they are confident that staff know what to do in the event of a child protection concern. Staff are vigilant at completing body maps for any marks they observe on children. However, written procedures in place, such as completion of all relevant information on body maps, are not always followed robustly. Safeguarding refresher training is, however, minimal, being scheduled for half a day every two years.

There are close levels of supervision due to the needs of the children missing from care are not identified as an issue. There are specific risk assessments in place to

ensure children are safe while accessing the community. Bullying is not identified as an issue at the home. The close level of support and supervision allows for each child to interact according to their particular traits.

There is a robust recruitment process, induction programme and probation period. All necessary checks required by regulation are completed before anyone starts working at the home. This ensures children are protected as much as possible from unsuitable adults. Staff receive regular supervision and appraisals, which helps ensure that they are able to effectively safeguard and promote children's welfare.

Staff are trained in the company's agreed restraint procedure and show sufficient knowledge and application of agreed methods. There is a culture of de-escalation and distraction and physical intervention is mainly low level contact to guide children to safety. Children and staff experience positive relationships. Staff are sensitive to the needs and abilities of children and respect their privacy and dignity. Incidents are recorded and analysed to inform future practice. As a result, children have a realistic chance to develop self-management competencies.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **satisfactory**.

Staff are subject to an induction programme and must satisfy the management of their competencies during a probation period. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to vocational qualification training. Staff also undertake training on a variety of topics which address the diverse needs of children. This ensures that staff possess the knowledge needed to undertake their role, as well as developing their skills and awareness of professional and legal developments. Staff competence is underpinned with regular team meetings where staff discuss each individual children's needs and ensure that a consistent approach is achieved. Regular supervision and appraisals also ensure that each member of staff receives guidance from a senior member of staff as well as having their role and effectiveness assessed.

Staff are clear who is responsible when the registered manager is not on duty and speak positively of their leadership team. Members of staff and parents report that the manager is approachable and will listen to comments and observations.

The home is resourced well to ensure children have good staffing ratios, access to purposeful activities and leisure interests. The home has a very pleasant homely environment equipped with modern appliances and furniture.

As a result of the fire some records, in particular the dietary needs of children, are being kept in an unsecured shed in the garden. They were relocated to more secure storage during the inspection at the request of the inspector.

The systems and management of the home ensure that the care of the children is scrutinised and that practice seeks to improve their life chances and enrich their

lives. Co-operation with other services and professionals maximises the opportunity for independence and participation in the community.

The Statement of Purpose does not currently contain all the matters listed in Schedule 1 of the regulations. Therefore, children are at some risk of being inappropriately placed.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Each child's individual needs and background are known and valued. The staff know each child's vulnerabilities and strengths and promote their identity.

There were no actions or recommendations from the previous inspection.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.