

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Stephen Smith
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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 home provides full time care for up to four children who have autism and learning disabilities. It is located in a residential area with public transport links with the city centre. There are shops and community facilities nearby. The home has a lounge and a dining area which is attached to the kitchen which children can access with support. There is also a second kitchen for the provision of food for those with special dietary requirements. The home has a conservatory which provides another communal area for children to spend time in. Each child has their own bedroom. There are bathing and toilet facilities offering the choice of a bath or shower close to bedrooms. Externally the home has enclosed gardens that are accessible to the young people. The home has sole use of a people carrier to enable young people to attend activities and visit places of interest.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced inspection looked at all key standards and examined all outcome areas. The inspector had contact with four young people but was not able to seek their views in any depth.

This children's home is a good service that provides very good care to young people in many areas of their lives.

Its care planning arrangements are excellent. The home identifies children's needs and plans to meet these very effectively. Care provision reflects these care plans and outcomes for children are monitored well. Children benefit from this strong focus on their individual needs. This helps them to develop new skills and abilities. Children's health is well promoted and arrangements for them to receive the medication they need are robust. The home works effectively to promote children's education and provides a range of leisure and recreational activities in support of this aim. The home works proactively with children's placing authorities to plan for their transition into adult services. Children's behaviour is well managed in a safe and individually relevant manner. Records of behavioural management interventions are generally good and improving though older records are not all correctly maintained.

Staff are well trained and supported. Staffing levels are based upon children's needs. This means that young people are kept safe. The work of the home is well managed although the manager has yet to complete a relevant management qualification.

The home is very well monitored and controlled by the registered provider to ensure

its quality. It provides a positive, homely and comfortable environment for young people to live in and meets the needs of the young people resident there well.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of this children's home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home promotes children's health well. Very effective care planning ensures that children's health needs are identified and addressed.

The home provides young people with a varied diet of wholesome food that is prepared based on their needs and preferences. Choices are available and food intake is monitored to ensure young people receive a healthy diet. Any specific dietary requirements that children may have, including any arising from their culture or faith, are identified and addressed. For example, the home provides a separate kitchen that is fully equipped in line with the religious requirements of one young person. Young people's primary and specialist health needs are identified and addressed. Placement plans set out, in detail, children's health needs and the plans to meet these needs to promote their health. Young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and receive support from any health specialists they need. The home provides a wide range of activities that promote healthy lifestyles for children. The organisation provides young people with a speech and language therapy service to help children communicate more effectively.

The home has appropriate lockable storage for medication. However, as the medication cabinet is not attached to the wall this is not as secure as it could be. All staff administering medication are fully trained in its safe handling and the home ensures that all staff have current first aid training. Medication is administered as prescribed and recorded fully and accurately. Consent for the administration of first aid and over the counter medication is gained from parents and children's doctors. This helps keep young people safe by ensuring they receive the correct medication and that the risk of an adverse reaction to any treatments used is minimised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home's care practice affords young people privacy and respect. Information about them is retained securely and personal care is provided in a way that maintains and promotes their dignity. The home's complaints procedure is provided to young people in pictorial form. Specific information is provided to parents letting them know how they can raise concerns on their children's behalf. Staff members know how to deal with a complaint should one be received and this helps ensure that young people's wellbeing is promoted.

The home's child protection procedure has been submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to ensure it is appropriate. Staff members understand this procedure and know how to help protect young people if there was ever an allegation or suspicion of abuse at the home. All staff have had recent training in child protection. This helps ensure that young people are kept safe and protected. The needs of young people accommodated in the home are such that intentional bullying is unlikely. However, children's individual behaviours and needs may be perceived by other children as bullying. The home's policy regarding bullying and its bullying risk assessments reflect this situation. Relationships between young people and the staff team are very good. High staffing levels mean that young people are well supervised. This helps ensure that children live in an environment in which they feel safe. Pictorial information about bullying and its negative effects is displayed in the home in an attempt to make this accessible to young people. The home's procedure and practice regarding the prevention of children leaving the home without authority is appropriate for the needs of the children accommodated. The home provides care to young people who are very vulnerable and are unable to go out unsupervised. For this reason the home keeps its external doors locked to keep young people safe. The restriction on young people's liberty that this creates is clearly justified and explained in their placement plans, fully risk assessed and minimised in practice.

Children's behaviour is well managed at this home. Staff have very good relationships with young people and staffing ratios allow staff to work in a way that encourages and shapes positive behaviour. Individualised positive behaviour support plans are in place for all children. These focus on work to prevent negative behaviours occurring but set out individualised response strategies for each child should challenging behaviour occur. Staff members all receive training in behaviour management and physical intervention that is based on the known individual needs of the children living at the home. Physical intervention is used as a last resort to keep young people and staff safe. The recording of these incidents has shown a significant improvement since the home opened. One earlier incident of physical intervention was not recorded in the restraint book. However, more recent recording is comprehensive, detailed and accurate. Records are well monitored and discussed by the manager and staff team. They are also subject to external monitoring to ensure that any lessons are identified and learned.

Risk assessments of young people's behaviour and known and likely activities are carried out and recorded so staff know what to do to keep young people safe. The home is continuing to keep its risk assessment process under review to ensure it is sufficiently specific. Health and safety matters are managed well. Maintenance and checks of equipment, including the gas boiler, portable electrical appliances and fire equipment are carried out appropriately. These matters help to keep young people safe. Fire drills are carried out regularly and all staff and young people have been involved so they know what to do to stay safe. The organisation has public and employee liability insurance in place that specifies that cover extends to this particular home.

The home's careful and rigorous recruitment procedure provides further protection for young people living there. This ensures that all new employees are suitable to work with children. Visitors to the home are well supervised.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with very good individual support. Assessed needs are clearly identified in care plans along with how they are to be met. Individual priority areas are identified for each child and plans link closely with risk assessments to ensure that they are safe for children. Person centred planning processes in the home provide each young person with a care passport that includes key information about them to help promote consistent care across different settings. Care delivery in the home is provided sensitively in line with each child's individual needs. Any specific care needs arising from young people's culture, ethnicity or disability are clearly identified and sensitively addressed.

The home works closely with the young people's school to provide good support for their education. Individual priority areas for each young person are developed to ensure consistent work is carried out on the most important areas for each young person across both settings. Young people have the necessary education plans in place and clear records are maintained of their academic progress. There is good communication between the home and the children's school. The organisation has plans to develop and formalise this further. The speech and language therapy team works with children both in school and at the home to assist with their education and development. A wide range of leisure activities are provided to young people to enhance their wider education and development as well as to provide for their enjoyment. The organisation's extended services team offer structured activities such as dance and rock climbing. The home's staff support young people to attend and take part in these activities. Young people also take part in a range of outings and activities from the home. This means that children are enabled to integrate into the community at a range of venues, undertake valued activities and learn a range of skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's approach to planning, delivering and monitoring the quality of individualised personal care to children is impressive. Young people's placement plans provide a detailed description of their care needs and the plans to meet these. Care planning attempts to capture children's aspirations as well as their needs. Placement plans integrate effectively with risk assessments, children's individual priority areas and their positive behaviour support plans. These documents combine to underpin all the care provided and promote very good outcomes for children. The information in plans is clearly accessible and regularly updated. This ensures that staff members all know how best to support each young person. Statutory reviews of

young people's care plans take place as required. The home provides clear and informative reports for these reviews and ensures that review decisions are reflected in young people's plans of care.

Contact arrangements are clearly set out in young people's files. Records of contacts and outcomes are maintained and the home works with families to ensure that visits home and other contacts are positive experiences. Placement plans make clear the arrangements required to support children's contact with their family and any additional circumstances that may be relevant. The home provides young people with good support to keep in touch with people important to them. It transports young people to their families' homes and back on a regular and planned basis. Family and friends are welcomed to the home to visit young people; arrangements for these visits are carefully risk assessed. The home provides good support for young people when they are moving in. Admissions are careful and planned with close consideration being given to whether the home can meet the young person's needs. The home goes to significant lengths to ensure it is able to fully meet the needs of young people accommodated. For example, a fully equipped separate kitchen was installed to meet the religious needs of one young person. The home works effectively to help plan for children's transitions. It works supportively with young people and their authorities to ensure that suitable future placements for young people are provided.

The home's staff work hard to identify young people's opinions and preferences and to ensure that these are addressed. Various communication methods are used to seek young people's views. These are supported by input and advice from the organisation's speech and language therapy team. Pictorial and symbol communication methods are used on a day-to-day basis in the home to help young people communicate. This helps young people to express their needs. Young people are consulted individually by staff using their own preferred communication methods. The organisation runs a parents' forum and consults young people and parents using questionnaires. The outcomes of consultation are used in the home's development and improvement process.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home encourages young people to be as independent as possible and develop the skills and abilities needed for their adult lives. Young people are engaged, as far as is possible, in the provision of their own care. The home works proactively with children's placing authorities to ensure that plans for their transition into adult services are developed in a sufficiently timely manner. Transition plans for each young person are developed by the home and shared with local authorities to help in the development of their own plans for the young person.

The home is a positive and homely environment for children to live in. It is spacious, well maintained and decorated. As such it meets the needs of the children resident there well and clearly reflects their personalities, preferences and tastes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Detailed and highly individualised care plans identify children's needs and set out how they will be addressed. They identify how any specific requirements arising from children's culture, faith, ethnicity or disability will be met. Practice in the home recognises children's specific needs. For example, great care is taken to deliver care to one young person in line with the requirements of his religion and the home has gone to great lengths to provide the equipment necessary. Support is given to help children communicate their needs which helps address some of the disadvantages they face. Staff work with young people in a way that is inclusive and does not mark them out as different. The daily life of the home and its activities encourage the integration of young people into the community and encourage their life chances.

The Statement of Purpose provides clear information about the home and the services it provides. It is generally comprehensive but does not provide enough information about the relevant qualifications and experience of the home's staff members. The young people's guide provides the necessary information in a format that aims to be as accessible as possible for the young people resident at the home. It provides young people with very good information about what they can expect from the home and how they will be cared for. It gives young people clear information about what to do and who to contact if they are not happy at the home. It also explains advocacy and makes clear the arrangements for young people to access support from an independent advocate.

The home's staff team is well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. Staff members have undertaken required essential training in order to provide a good level of safe care to young people. Most of the home's staff team members have undertaken their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people. This helps ensure that they provide a good service to young people. All staff members are expected to undertake this training after they have completed their induction to the home. The organisation provides the home's staff members with a wide range of appropriate training to help them in their work. Staff members know the needs of the young people and understand how to meet them. Staff are well managed and supervised and rotas allow staff to spend time with young people. The home increases staffing levels as necessary to ensure that children are provided with good levels of care and support. The manager exercises effective leadership and management of the home. However, she has yet to commence work towards a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management.

External monitoring of the home is robust. Visits that take place under Regulation 33 are carried out each month and reports provided. Additional management monitoring arrangements exist. Regular formal visits are undertaken by a senior manager in the organisation and periodic quality reviews take place by a team of other managers in the organisation. Internal monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is also

good. This means that the registered provider maintains a clear view of the operation of the home to ensure the well-being of the young people accommodated there.

Young people's files contain all required information so they have a full history of their care that helps inform their plans and acts as a source of information for future reference.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that prescribed medication is kept securely. Specifically, that the medication cabinet is securely attached to the wall or floor (NMS 13.10)
- ensure that a record of every restraint on a child by an adult is kept in a separate dedicated bound and numbered book (NMS 22.9)
- ensure that the children's guide contains all the information in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Specifically, that full details of the relevant experience and qualifications of staff members are described (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that the manager has a qualification at level 4 NVQ in management or another qualification that matches the competencies required by that NVQ. (NMS 34.3)