

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24 February 2010
Inspector	Sonya Robinson
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	18 June 2009
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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 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 home operates from two separate houses that are in close proximity to each other and this service is linked to a specialist school. Both properties are detached and provide spacious settings situated in a residential area, with local shopping outlets close by. There is good access to a number of parks, cinemas, leisure and recreational facilities. The school that the young people attend is a short driving distance away. This school is also managed by the same organisation.

All young people considered for placement experience Autistic Spectrum Disorder with associated communication and sensory impairment and possible learning disability.

Placements in the home are generally provided for school terms only, with accommodation being provided on weekdays and weekends. Periods of respite care are agreed on an individual basis. There is also provision for children to reside permanently at the home.

Summary

This visit was an interim inspection and was unannounced. One outcome area for young people was fully looked at during this inspection, which was staying safe. Further issues were also looked at under the other outcome areas as a follow-up from the previous inspection. This inspection looked at the progress that the home has made with the actions and recommendations made at the last inspection. The individual ratings under the outcome areas have not changed since the previous inspection, as this inspection has not looked at all of the key standards in full, with the exception of staying safe.

The home continues to be a satisfactory service that meets most of the national minimum standards. Young people enjoy living there and feel cared for. The staff place emphasis on young people's needs and supporting them with their daily lives.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager and organisation were asked to ensure that staff receive appropriate training and supervision; that medication be safely received and administered within the home; that information on staff files should be in accordance with current legalisation; that the home be maintained internally and externally; and that records within the home are regularly monitored.

There is now a rolling-programme of training in place for staff along with a structured supervision programme. Medication procedures have been reviewed in order to make them safer for young people and staff. Information held within staff files has improved. However, these still do not include sufficient information to make systems more robust. Toilets and bathrooms in both houses have been refurbished, though some decorating issues remain. Records within the home are now being monitored on a regular monthly basis though currently not by the manager.

In order to raise standards and improve practice, the manager and organisation were also asked to ensure that key worker reports reflect on all aspects of young people's lives; to make sure

that each young person's health plan captures all areas of their health that require monitoring; to make sure the placement plan captures cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met. In addition, the manager and organisation were asked to obtain, through young people's chosen methods of communication, their opinions and views about their care plans and to enable them to get to know about the contents of these; to make sure transitional plans are developed that support and help prepare young people for adulthood; and to enable young people, as far as is feasible, to be involved in the review process.

All of the above has improved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have plans showing their health needs and the arrangements for meeting these. Staff monitor young people to make sure they are healthy by encouraging them to attend routine health checks and by ensuring they get medical treatment when they are unwell. The home has good links with specialist health and advisory services, to make sure that young people get suitable support. Staff deal with health issues sensitively and make sure young people get appropriate support and advice to promote healthy lifestyles.

The home manages young people's medication safely. Medication is securely stored in a suitable cupboard. Staff keep detailed records of any medicines stored in the home and the administration of these to young people. This means young people receive the medication they need in a safe and organised way.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff demonstrate a positive approach to ensuring that young people feel valued, and their privacy and dignity is maintained. This is achieved by implementing appropriate records, such as placement plans and risk assessments, which reflect the level of care provided to each young person.

The home has an accessible complaints procedure. Young people can access this, and all complaints are given high regard and they are acted upon. Staff speak and interact with young people to ensure that they are happy and they have opportunities to make their feelings known.

Young people, their parents and other relevant authorities are involved in the development of care records, such as health plans and placement plans. Staff have a clear understanding of young people's communication methods. This is used to ascertain individual opinions with regards to how they wish to be supported, in ways that promotes their welfare and keeps them safe. Records explain how the home keeps young people safe, in line with their assessed needs, in areas such as safe moving and handling, running off and medication.

Bullying is not currently an issue for young people. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and provide supervision and encourage young people to deal with any difficulties constructively when necessary. Staff are aware of young people's rights, legislation and guidance relating to freedom of movement and follow this in practice. The home has individual risk assessments in place for the young people which are particular to the young person's needs. This provides consistency of care.

Staff build positive relationships with young people by explaining and showing them what is socially acceptable behaviour. Staff see young people in a positive light and are committed to helping them when they are anxious or upset. Also, they are knowledgeable and understanding about young people's individual behaviours.

Staff use communication skills to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Records relating to physical intervention show that it is used as a last resort to protect the young person or others. Sanctions as such are not carried out due to the understanding of the young people; instead there are 'alternative opportunities'. This highlights when an activity is not carried out for reason, such as agitated behaviour, and what is offered instead or when it is carried out at later date.

Staff praise young people when they do well and reward them. They also reassure young people when they are upset and help them deal with their anxieties and frustrations in a positive way. Staff do not condone unacceptable behaviour and assist young people to communicate their frustrations.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire safety systems to make sure that the home is a safe place to live. However, some fire checks have recently lapsed. Staff have attended an appropriate training programme, which encompasses all aspects of safeguarding young people with learning disabilities, including delivering and maintaining safe practices around social and medical support needs.

All staff working at the home are appropriately vetted, however, systems are not robust enough to fully safeguard young people to a good standard, such as photographic identification being consistently held on file and whether staff are full or part-time.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff support and positively encourage young people to take part in wide range of leisure activities. They have multiple opportunities to develop confidence in their skills, enjoy their leisure time and try new things. Staff are very good at encouraging young people to take part in activities and try new experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement plans provide information to demonstrate how care is provided to each young person. They also include information regarding young people's religious and cultural beliefs. The home's systems for monitoring and reviewing the placement and care records involve young people, their parents and social workers. Since the last inspection staff have used innovative ways of obtaining young people's opinions for their reviews which has included making a DVD with them, in order to express their views. However, young people's meetings regarding matters affecting them, including day to day issues, remain infrequent.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff support young people to prepare for adult life by encouraging and supporting them to undertake tasks suitable to their age and understanding.

Accommodation is provided in two houses. The accommodation provided is warm and welcoming and has, on the whole, been maintained. However, there are some decorating issues which are unfinished where previous work has been undertaken and there is evidence of damp in the basement area of one of the houses. Young people benefit from a spacious environment that includes lounges, a light and sensory room and a games room. The outdoor areas of both houses also provide young people with ample space to relax and play in a safe and secure setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a Statement of Purpose, however, it does not fully reflect the service as a whole and is due for review.

Staff employed at the home are provided with a good level of support and supervision to maintain professional practice and review their performance. When supervisions have been missed, the reasons why are noted. There is a rolling programme of training in place for staff to access.

Monthly monitoring visits undertaken by a representative of the home owner have been undertaken and copies of these reports have been received by Ofsted in accordance with legalisation. Monthly reports of the manager's evaluation of the service have been completed though not by the manager of the home. Systems within the home ensure that records are maintained and regularly monitored and reviewed.

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
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out under schedule 2 (Regulation 26)	31 March 2010
27	maintain for all staff the records specified in schedule 4 and ensure that these are kept up to date (Regulation 29 (1))	31 March 2010
24	ensure that the home is maintained to a good structural repair both externally and internally. (Regulation 31 (2))	30 April 2010

Recommendations

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

- maintain adequate precautions to protect young people, staff and visitors against the risk of fire, such as ensuring all fire records are kept up to date (NMS 26.4, 26.8)
- ensure that the views of children on all matters affecting them, including day-to-day ones, are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis through, for example, regular children's meetings (NMS 8.4)

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- ensure that the registered person of the home monitors the setting and takes action to improve or adjust provisions where necessary (NMS 33.1)
 - ensure that the Statement of Purpose guide accurately sets out what the home is to do for the children and the manner in which care is provided. (NMS 1.1)