

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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Date of last inspection	17 February 2010
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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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for a total of four young people with learning disabilities between the ages of 10 and 17 years. The home can also provide a service for up to two young people who have additional physical disabilities.

All young people are provided with single bedrooms. The rear of the home has a garden and patio area with ramped access to the lawn. A car park is available at the front of the home for visitors and staff. The home is situated close to a city centre and is within short travelling distance of most local amenities. Staff use public transport and their own vehicles to further assist young people to access the community. Once every three weeks the home uses a hire vehicle to ensure that group activities can take place. Four young people currently live at the home and all being present for part of this inspection.

Summary

This unannounced full inspection monitors the key national minimum standards. It focused on areas related to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consulted with young people, planned for their care and how the staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service. The one action and one recommendation made at the previous inspection in February 2010 have also been looked at.

Following this inspection, the overall judgement is satisfactory. There are two actions and four recommendations made on this occasion. These arise in staying safe, economic wellbeing and organisation. The inspection found that the home provides a satisfactory standard of care and support that helps young people in their education, personal, social and emotional development. The home is clean, comfortable and homely. However, repairs to electrical equipment had not been repaired promptly. Staff are supported well by the manager who has a strong commitment and focus on improvement although, staff are still not meeting supervision timescales as required by national minimum standards. Staffing levels have the potential to compromise young people's safety, as the current complex needs of the young people require a higher staff ratio than is being consistently achieved.

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 home's last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure all persons receive appropriate supervision and that any gaps in employment have a satisfactory written explanation.

Supervisions although much improved, are still not meeting timescales as defined by national minimum standards. This means that the development of staff's practice on the diverse aspects of care is potentially at risk of being weakened. No new staff have started since the last inspection but the manager is mindful that gaps in employment must be explored and will now include this activity at the interview stage.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people's health and dietary needs are clearly identified and met. Young people are provided with a range of healthy nutritious meals through well balanced menus. Staff promote healthy lifestyle choices in daily routines, personal care, exercise and activities. Clear health plans, based on detailed initial assessments, ensure that the health requirements of young people are known to staff. This means young people receive effective individual support that promotes their welfare.

Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician when they are admitted to the home and are well supported at health appointments. The home has good links with external health professionals. This good working practice is confirmed by one young person's social worker who states that 'there is a close working relationship between staff and a dietician'. This enables staff to make sure that young people access additional health services that they need.

Staff are well trained in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid. Policies and procedures are in place and there is a designated lead for medication in the home. Staff are keeping clear records of the administration of medication and these are regularly monitored by management.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has appropriate policies, procedures and care practices, which ensures young people's privacy is given a high priority. Young people's individual files are held securely in a locked cabinet within a locked office. There is a complaints system in operation and there has been one complaint made since the last inspection which has been resolved satisfactorily. Young people are also able to raise any concerns with their individual independent advocates. However, the complaints policy does not have the correct contact details of the regulator. This may delay any issues being raised with the appropriate external body.

There is a robust protocol for managing unauthorised absences to keep young people safe. No young people have left the home without permission since the last inspection. There is a strong emphasis in the home on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour and effort. Staff develop positive relationships with young people and are supporting them to manage their own behaviour in a way that is socially acceptable. Staff are trained to manage challenging behaviour, including the use of physical interventions. A parent voiced that 'I am very pleased with how the home has taught my son self-control with his feelings. They have a strong bond and he is able to share his feelings positively so generally his behaviour is well managed'.

The management of health and safety processes is appropriate, which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or injury in the home. Equipment and installations are serviced regularly and there are regular fire safety tests. Young people take part in evacuation drills, so that they understand what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency. Risk assessments on the environment and young people's activities are robust and are regularly reviewed to make sure that information is up to date. A social worker confirmed this as they stated that 'all risks are assessed and discussed with myself as social worker. Child safety is a priority for staff'.

There are appropriate procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. These ensure that all staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work. The identity of all visitors to the home is checked before they are allowed in. These systems protect young people, as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive an excellent level of individual support that meets their specific and diverse needs. Each young person has an identified key worker, but all staff take equal responsibility for caring for them. Staff have strong links with services outside the home to ensure that additional resources can be made available for young people when a need is identified.

Staff are very positive about the value of education and work hard to make sure that every young person has an educational placement that meets their needs. Daily attendance at school is an expected part of the life of the home and staff work hard to help young people achieve this. They successfully advocate on behalf of young people if there are difficulties at school and provide effective practical and emotional support to help them maintain their attendance. As a result, young people's school attendance is excellent. All young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated, which encourages young people to persevere with their education.

Young people are effectively enabled to undertake leisure activities. A parent wrote 'my son enjoys all of the activities; he is encouraged all the time and participates willingly. He looks forward to the annual holiday'. This view is further supported by a young person's social worker who says, 'at reviews staff ensure that any issues with regards to leisure are supported and planned for'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are supported by clear and concise care plans which detail their needs and wishes. These plans clearly identify outcomes and targets to be achieved. The implementation of care plans is the responsibility of individual key workers with contributions from the team as a whole. The care and progress of young people is formally reviewed through the statutory reviewing process. This ensures that plans are kept up to date and relevant to the ongoing and changing needs of young people. As a result, young people's good well-being is promoted.

Young people's contact with family and significant others is encouraged and staff provide support to make sure that positive contact takes place. Young people are given good support when they arrive and leave the home and these routines are based around individual needs and circumstances. Staff liaise with social workers and other services to prepare young people for moving on to new placements or into the community. Young people are supported to be involved with these arrangements so that they develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

Seeking young people's opinions and helping them make decisions about matters that affect them are fully integrated into the care practices of the home. The home uses alternative communication systems in order to help them support young people to make choices.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff support and encourage young people to develop independent living skills. Young people take part in the daily household tasks, such as, shopping, preparation of meals, laundry and tidying their own rooms. Staff work well in partnership with other agencies to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

The home is located in a residential area with access to a range of community facilities and resources for health, education, recreation and leisure. There is a programme for maintenance, decoration and repair which addresses health and safety aspects of the home. At the beginning of this inspection a wall light in the hallway had no shade on it and the wiring being covered only by black tape. When the lighting in the hallway is turned on, power still goes to the broken light. The young people only have to pull back the tape and they expose the wiring. It is acknowledged that staff supervision of the young people is good which minimises the risk of them accessing this light. However, this fault had been identified at the beginning of June which meant this has taken a month to fix. This is an unacceptable timescale given that it has the potential to place young people at risk of harm.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually and updated. However, there are currently some administrative errors. In one section it details the wrong name for the Registered Manager and it has the wrong review date at the end of the document. Young people receive a young person's handbook. However, this is only in a written format which the current young people would be unable to understand.

The home is organised in a way that delivers a satisfactory standard of care to young people. The Registered Manager and senior staff are experienced and qualified and the staff team is well trained. The majority of care staff are qualified to an appropriate level. However, at times current staffing levels have meant that only two staff have been on duty to four young people. One young person is stipulated as requiring a one to one staff ratio. Two of the other three young people continually require help with personal care and as a result, also require a lot of supervision. Although two staff is the minimum required as identified by the Statement of Purpose, given the current complex needs of the young people, this is not enough to comprehensively maintain safe levels of supervision and overall care. In addition to this, the Statement of Purpose stipulates that managers are supernumerary to the two staff members on duty. There have been several occasions where the Registered Manager has been on shift with only one other staff member. This makes it difficult for him to consistently maintain the important managerial aspects of his role.

There still continues to be shortfalls in meeting required timescales for the supervision of staff. New staff should receive fortnightly supervisions for the first six months of their employment and this is not happening. This means that these staff members are at risk of not receiving the support and guidance they may need to help them fulfil their job role. Annual staff appraisals are not taking place. However, regular staff meetings are providing staff with the opportunity to share information appropriately.

The well-being of young people is central to the running of the home and there are appropriate management systems in place to make sure that the work of the home is properly monitored and that satisfactory standards of care are maintained.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment to ensuring that every young person has care that is individually tailored to meet their specific needs and that all young people feel valued and part of their community. Young people are encouraged to learn about other cultures and communities and to respect each other and staff.

Documentation relating to young people is detailed and recording is of an adequate standard. Files provide a secure record of young people's needs, development, progress and history. Information in young people's files is cross referenced with other records kept in the home, so that every young person has a clear history of their time in care and in this placement, to which they can have access.

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
28	ensure all persons receive appropriate supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27.4 (a))	31 August 2010
30	ensure there are sufficient staff for the running of the home taking into account the needs and behaviour of the children and young people. (Regulation 25.1)	31 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the complaints policy is reviewed and includes the correct contact details of the regulatory body (NMS 16.5)
- ensure that equipment in the home that is damaged and poses a risk is repaired promptly (NMS 24.3)
- update the Statement of Purpose to ensure it contains the correct staff names (NMS 1.5)
- develop a children's guide to the home in a format that is appropriate to the understanding of the young people in the home. (NMS 1.3)