

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor / Kevin Whatley
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Date of last inspection	17 November 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 children's home comprises four houses set around the manager's office. Two houses can accommodate seven young people each and two can accommodate six each. The total complement of the children's home is 26 beds.

The home caters for young people between the ages of seven and 17 years with a variety of disabilities, primarily epilepsy and learning difficulties. Each unit has the facility to accommodate wheelchair users and has equipment suitable to care for young people with a physical disability as well as learning difficulties. On the same site is a residential special school which the young people attend as day pupils. While the home was newly registered in 2009, the individual houses were previously separately registered as children's homes and have therefore provided continuous care for the young people accommodated.

Summary

At this unannounced inspection all the key standards were assessed. The home provides a good standard of care to the young people. It is clear that the staff team values and promotes the rights of the young people and works hard to ensure that the home is run in line with their wishes and well-being. Care planning and support for the young people are of an excellent standard and this is underpinned by members of staff having prompt and available access to specialist support when they need it. Monitoring by the manager and the unit managers for the separate houses is of a good standard overall. The staff team are committed to promoting the safety of the young people as well as providing them with stimulating environments and activities.

Two actions were made as a result of this inspection; one relates to ensuring that restraint records contain all the information required and the other requires that the home ensures that the records of medication are maintained accurately.

Two recommendations were made. These relate to ensuring that the staff team achieve a ratio of 80% who have the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and recording the names of the young people involved in fire drills.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection an action was made requiring that the home includes all the relevant details in records of restraint. While this has been achieved in the majority of cases, there are still occasions when the location of the restraint has not been included in the report. This action remains.

Two of three recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. Placement plans are regularly reviewed and progress made against identified targets is recorded consistently. Visits undertaken by external managers now include all four units during each visit. The reports made as a result of these monitoring visits now reflect the care given in all of the settings which make up the children's home.

The organisation continues to deliver training for National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and it is an expectation that all members of staff achieve this qualification. The organisation does not yet have a ratio of 80% of staff who have achieved this qualification. The recommendation remains.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The staff know each young person's dietary needs and preferences. This includes having a detailed knowledge of whether the needs are based on cultural or medical issues. The young people are offered a varied diet which is assessed by the catering manager and dietician to ensure it is healthy and balanced. In line with their abilities, some young people are given the opportunity to prepare some snacks and prepare some food. Meal times are well organised, the young people receiving individual support from the staff on duty as well as being provided with the necessary adapted cutlery to enable them to eat their food as independently as possible.

Healthcare needs are met to a very high standard. The young people at the home have complex medical needs which require a high level of support and medical oversight to ensure their well-being. Specialists are based on the site enabling swift advice, treatment and support if it is needed. Health plans are the subject of regular review to ensure that each young person's needs are kept up to date and met. Specialists on site include a paediatric neurologist, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. All members of staff receive epilepsy first aid training.

All members of staff are trained in the administration of medication and have their competency assessed by nursing staff. The home has a system in place to monitor medication administered and in stock. Records in this area are not always accurate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have their privacy and dignity sensitively supported and respected. Staff knock on doors before entering bedrooms and are mindful not to discuss sensitive or confidential information in front of young people. All confidential information is stored appropriately. Young people who require assistance with personal care have this provided in a caring and discreet manner with individual protocols outlining how this is to be achieved for each young person.

The home has a clear complaints procedure which takes into account the complex communication needs of the young people. Details of the complaints procedure are included in the young person's and parents' guide in a variety of formats. The complaints process is displayed openly in pictorial and symbol form around the houses. The staff are aware that many of the young people may not have the cognitive ability to understand the concept of what constitutes a formal complaint; however, they are very aware of how each young person may display displeasure through behaviour or vocalisation. When matters arise they are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

Young people are protected as well as possible from the risks of harm. Robust policies and procedures address all areas of safeguarding, with staff receiving very good and regular child protection training. The organisation has a dedicated safeguarding team on site with clear protocols ensuring prompt responses to incidents or concerns. Many young people have complex

emotional, medical and physical needs which can result in them injuring themselves. Extremely robust working practices are in place which ensure each event is closely reviewed and monitored including informing parents and carers.

There is a policy and guidance for the staff to follow with regards to bullying. The cognitive disabilities of the young people mean that they do not necessarily understand the concept of bullying. The staff who work in the home are aware of the group dynamics and what triggers can lead to behaviour which may cause distress to other young people. Close supervision and support of the young people ensure that incidents are kept to a minimum.

The staff are very aware of the young people's extreme vulnerability in the event that they go missing. Therefore, the need to closely supervise them to ensure their safety, is embedded in the practice of the home. There is very clear guidance and an emergency protocol for staff to follow if a young person is missing. There have been no incidents where young people have gone missing from the home or while on supervised outings.

Young people have their challenging and risky behaviours addressed in an excellent fashion. Individualised behaviour management programmes are developed utilising a multitude of expert advice and guidance. This in turn allows for holistic plans of care, including behaviour management strategies, to be implemented and reviewed at short notice. Risk assessments are completed which give a comprehensive review of the problematic and risky behaviours of each young person, along with guidance for staff on how to manage and reduce concerns. Strategies clearly help to manage individual patterns of behaviour and improve the lives of young people.

Staff are clearly aware of the needs and behaviours of the young people in their care. They respond to their behaviours in a consistent and thoughtful manner. For the majority of the young people living at the setting the concept of reparation or empathy can be very limited, therefore the use of sanctions is kept to a minimum.

All staff are trained in the use of physical interventions, with restraints only being used when absolutely necessary. A majority of incidents which include the need for staff to intervene physically centre around guiding young people away from situations. In general, records of restraints are completed accurately; however, the location where incidents occur is not always confirmed.

The health and safety of young people and staff alike are considered in full. Routine checks and servicing ensure all electrical, gas and fire fighting equipment are fit for purpose. Regular tests of fire alarms and emergency lighting occur along with fire drills. A majority of the records completed for fire drills confirmed the details of all persons evacuated, however, they did not all include the names of each young person who took part.

Comprehensive recruitment procedures ensure no members of staff work with young people until such time as all necessary and required checks have been confirmed and assessed.

The systems operating in the home combined with the staff awareness and sensitivity ensure that the young people's well-being and safety are promoted to a good standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The individual needs of young people are met in an outstanding fashion. The organisation benefits greatly from employing specialist staff across the educational, medical and social care spectrum. As a result, high standards of holistic care planning are implemented focusing on the emotional, physical, medical and social care needs of each young person. Care plans clearly highlight the particular needs of young people and how these will be met by staff.

Young people receive a consistently high level of support with key working and assessment playing a fundamental role in the setting. Staff understand the particular needs of young people extremely well with young people benefiting from intensive support, care and guidance.

Key workers liaise closely with all interested parties including parents, teachers, social workers and child care experts to ensure a joined-up approach in meeting the individual needs of young people. Routine child-focus meetings review the individual progress of each young person with swift and thoughtful responses made to meet any changes in needs or circumstances.

Young people benefit from an extremely positive learning culture. The home is located on the same site as the organisation's school and college. Each young person has a personal education plan that clearly defines their learning and pastoral care needs. Since the last inspection care staff now support young people within the school environment. This has been seen as a very positive move with close working relationships with education staff being further enhanced. Key workers contribute to educational reviews within an ethos of working together to assist each young person to achieve to the best of their abilities.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. Staff display a high level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy. Regular visits occur to local places of interest. Wherever possible the individual interests of young people are supported and facilitated. The setting is well equipped with specialised activity equipment with ball pools and sensory rooms available on a daily basis. The home is situated in large grounds and woodlands which allow for regular bike rides and walks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Rigorous assessments are made on all relevant and available information regarding the physical, social, behavioural, emotional and medical needs of the individual young person. Such assessments are incorporated into plans of care which highlight the individual needs of every young person. The detailed care plans clearly guide staff in meeting the individual needs of each young person. These plans are regularly reviewed, assessed and updated to ensure that the young people's needs are known and addressed.

Regular reviews of care ensure each care plan matches the current needs of each young person in an individualised fashion. The whole staff team contribute to care plans during team meetings. Any change to each young person's circumstances, behaviour or emotional well-being, are considered fully in the team meetings as well as in multidisciplinary reviews involving specialists from the organisation. Weekly reviews of each young person are completed by key workers and these include records of key events and how each young person has achieved targets identified in their care plans.

Members of staff support and facilitate contact between the young people and their parents and families. Any restrictions on contact are known.

Young people are only admitted into the home once a comprehensive assessment of their care needs has been completed. Admissions are carefully considered and the process is planned commensurate with each young person's ability to deal with change and transition. Similarly, transition plans are also carefully planned.

Members of staff know how each young person communicates. Due to their learning disabilities the young people often develop idiosyncratic styles of communication and these are recognised by the staff working with them. Overall the staff encourage the young people to have a voice in the running of the home, especially by responding to their likes and preferences around food and activities. Few of the young people are able to verbalise their thoughts and feelings and so rely on augmented communication methods. The members of staff develop their knowledge of the young people by being with them and understanding how they use behaviour as a form of communication. The views and preferences of the young people are also gained from parents and this enables the staff to run the home with their wishes held in mind.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with appropriate guidance as they approach adulthood. Given the extremely complex and multiple needs of young people, they will need long-term care and support throughout their adult lives. Wherever possible, staff provide advice and guidance for practical issues such as helping young people learn to dress themselves. Young people who are due to move on from the setting are provided with excellent support. Close working relationships are established between future placements with regular contact with parents ensuring as smooth a transition as possible is achieved.

Young people benefit from living within a comfortable and homely environment. All areas of the home are in a very good condition, being extremely clean and hygienic. Young people are encouraged to personalise their own bedrooms and do so with posters, pictures and personal keepsakes. Communal areas offer sufficient space and comfort with all modern entertainment items being available. Activity and games equipment is readily available with dedicated rooms offering ball pools and sensory play and interactive items. Outdoor facilities include climbing frames and slides while regular bike rides and walks take place in the adjacent woods and parks.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose is up to date and accurately reflects what the home intends to achieve. There is a children's handbook, which explains in pictorial and symbolic form what it is like to live in the home. These documents are checked regularly to ensure that they are up to date and accurate.

All members of staff receive supervision and appraisals. Members of staff report that they receive good levels of ongoing support from senior members of staff. Additionally, there are regular team meetings to discuss the running of the home and the young people's behaviour and progress. Policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed, are readily available through the organisation's intranet system.

The training offered to the staff team is varied and regular. There is a rolling training program for National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The home does not yet have a ratio of 80% of staff who have achieved this qualification. There is a thorough induction plan which ensures that new members of staff are prepared for working in the home. The committed staff team has enough experience, qualifications and skills to offer good levels of support to the young people.

Shifts are planned with detail in order to outline what the staff need to do to support the young people and to enable them to succeed in their targets which have been outlined in their plans.

Practice is monitored by senior managers from within the organisation but who do not work in the home. They carry out regular visits to assess the standard of care provided. The manager in turn also regularly checks all the areas outlined in Schedule 6, such as restraint and sanctions, medication, accidents, child protection issues and admissions and discharges. The overall monitoring of records carried out is of a good standard. The quality of monitoring ensures that the standard of care is consistently assessed to ensure that the young people are being well cared for.

The young people's care plans are very well organised, regularly reviewed and updated and are subject to checks by the key workers, supervisory staff and manager. This ensures that all members of staff have access to up to date and relevant information which can guide them in their support and care of the young people. All information is securely stored.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each young person's individual needs are known and met to a very good standard by the staff team. The nature of the young people who live in the home means that each individual's needs and idiosyncrasies have to be carefully catered for. Diversity and difference are seen as an opportunity to learn from each other and to be enjoyed and celebrated.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
12	ensure that an accurate record is maintained of any medication stored and administered (Regulation 21 (1))	6 August 2010
22	ensure that all the details required are contained in records of restraint. (Regulation 17 (4) (a - g)	6 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- record the names of the young people who are present during fire drills (NMS 26)

- continue to train a minimum of 80% of the staff team to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29)