

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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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

This is a new children's home registered to provide accommodation and care for up to 12 children, boys and girls, between the ages of 6 and 17. Accommodation is arranged so that children receive a number of short breaks at regular intervals through the year which provides their parents and families with some respite care.

The home is designed and purpose built to provide care for children with a range of disabilities. It has specialised equipment, aids and adaptations to support children with physical disabilities. Part of the home is a designated self-help unit for older and more able young people to develop their life skills and promote independence.

There are 12 single bedrooms all with en suite shower, toilet and sink. Some have overhead tracking and there are disabled bath and shower rooms with overhead tracking. All accommodation is at ground floor level with wheelchair access, doorways, corridors and rooms are large enough to accommodate wheelchair users. There is a range of communal areas including two lounges, play room, soft play room, two computer rooms, sensory room and outdoor play equipment. There is a domestic kitchen in the self-help unit as well as an industrial kitchen and dining room.

There is parking for visitors and gardens surrounding the home.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection covering all the outcome areas below. This was the first inspection of this home since it has registered. The staff group have all transferred from a previous setting which used to provide the same type of service. Children who used the previous setting now come to this home for their short breaks.

The Registered Manager for this home has been absent from the home for over two months. A Registered Manager from another home has been in post for a month managing on a temporary basis. There are shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards and children's homes regulations in all the outcome areas. These include: the quality of care planning; the provision of diets; internally locked doors restricting access within the home; weak risk management; lack of information in formats appropriate to the needs of children; a poor homely environment; ineffective use of the self-help unit; staff training, supervision and appraisals; and management monitoring.

The temporary manager had already identified a number of issues prior to the inspection and had already taken steps to secure improvements. Her work has resulted in the home achieving an overall quality rating of satisfactory. There are a number of required improvements as a result of this inspection covering the shortfalls listed above.

Improvements since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of this home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The health of children and young people is adequately promoted during the short breaks they have at the home. As this is a service offering short breaks, parents retain overall responsibility for the healthcare of their children who spend the majority of time at home with them. Care staff work with parents and other professionals to support children and young people with their healthcare needs.

Healthcare records regarding children and young people's health assessments, their needs and ongoing care are not always kept up to date with detailed information about individual needs. Though staff were able to discuss how they support individual children and young people the shortfall in record keeping has the potential to compromise the quality of care.

Children and young people are generally encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Care practice with regards to this is not consistent resulting in some individuals not having the best possible diet to meet their needs. While there are records of children and young people's preferences these are not always followed consistently so sometimes individuals are provided with food they will not eat. The impact of this is exacerbated when children and young people are not able to speak up for themselves. Planned menus based on individual needs and preferences indicate a wholesome nutritious diet is provided. This was observed to be the case on the day of inspection for most children and young people staying at the home. Menus are adapted for different cultural events and celebrations, however some specific cultural dietary needs are not promoted well. Records are kept so staff can monitor children and young people's diets but these are not effectively used to ensure all individuals receive a varied diet.

There are opportunities for young people to develop and learn cooking skills in the self-help unit. This unit is not effectively utilised and regularly unused so some young people miss out on these opportunities.

Medication is securely stored keeping it safe from children and young people. Records are well maintained and there are safe procedures to ensure individuals receive the correct medication when they need it. Staff have up to date first aid training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Staff have been trained to

administer emergency medication to children and young people with epilepsy. This training has not been provided to all staff with specific regard to each individual who needs this support. Similarly not all staff have been trained to support individuals with percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) feeds. While there are some staff on each shift to support children and young people with these needs the shortfall in training limits the overall effectiveness of the staff team as a whole. The manager has planned for more staff to receive this training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Overall there are satisfactory arrangements to keep children and young people free from harm and help keep them safe. Staff are trained in child protection and understand the correct procedures and what to do to help keep children and young people free from harm and ensure their safe return if they are missing. Children and young people do not experience any bullying and staff encourage them to get along with each other.

Staff help children and young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through close supervision, support and social interaction. Staff are patient and will explain what is acceptable and help individuals understand what the expectations are of how they should behave. Sanctions are not used in response to unacceptable behaviour as these are not seen as appropriate to the children and young people's understanding, this is good practice. Staff are trained to physically intervene if anyone's safety is at risk from poor behaviour though this has not been necessary since the home opened.

Risk assessments about children and young people's behaviour, known and likely activities, the potential for bullying and abuse are recorded in varying quality. For example the recorded measures to limit risks for some individuals were limited to 'close staff supervision' and did not consider other strategies to minimise risks for particular children and young people. However, for some individuals there were more varied ways identified in which staff could reduce potential risks. There were no available risk assessments in relation to the home's premises and grounds which has the potential to compromise the safety of children and young people. While there is close staff supervision the risks are minimised but this is not always the case depending on how many children and young people are staying at the home together.

With regards to risk management and promoting children and young people's rights the use of internal door locks and the key fob system is an excessive and unreasonable use of control. While some individuals have a fob which allows them greater freedom the majority do not and have to rely on staff to unlock doors for them. The reasons for this are not adequately risk assessed, detailed in care plans and have not been agreed with the placing authority.

Parents know how to complain but there was a lack of suitable information in

understandable formats for children and young people explaining their rights and what to do if they were unhappy with their care. This brings an element of inequality to the accessibility of the complaints process as some children and young people are more able to speak up for themselves than others. Action taken in response to complaints indicates that complaints are addressed fairly and improvements put in place to avoid the issue occurring again.

Children and young people benefit from having their privacy and dignity respected especially when being supported with intimate personal care. There is guidance for staff about provision of appropriate personal care and they know how to follow this. Personal records about children and young people's care are stored safely to maintain the required degree of confidentiality.

There are regular fire drills to practice evacuating the building safely though it is not clear which staff, children and young people had the opportunity to practice this. Staff working at the home have received fire safety training and records of fire safety and other safety checks are up to date and accurate to help ensure children and young people live in a safe environment.

There are good procedures to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to work with children and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff provide children and young people with individual support. The quality of assessment information about individual needs and lack of attention to ensuring individual care plans are up to date is not conducive to ensuring that the quality of individual care will be good.

Children and young people are offered individualised support in line with the care plans that are in place. There is an emphasis on working with children, young people and their families to ascertain their needs and wishes. Similarly staff gather information about individual care needs from other professionals involved in their care. These processes are not well established to ensure there is accurate up to date information about every person's individual needs.

Staff support children and young people with various forms of communication signs, symbols and pictures. Again practice is not well embedded to fully support a range of individual needs. The manager was in the process of improving this at the time of inspection.

Children and young people have access to additional forms of support from other agencies when needs are identified. These include services from occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists and specialist nurses.

As with healthcare the responsibility for education remains with parents. Staff do

promote children and young people's good attendance at school at the times they are resident in the home. There is a home to school diary to assist in communicating between care staff, school and parents about the welfare of individuals. Care staff visit schools and try and ensure a similar consistent approach to care in the home for example with promoting communication and encouraging good behaviour.

Staff encourage community integration through involvement in activities external to the home. Children and young people have some opportunities to enjoy trips out and make use of local and wider community amenities. There is also a wide range of in-house activities available to promote children and young people's hobbies and interests. Leisure time is not well planned to make best use of what is on offer which limits the opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills and confidence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are adequate arrangements for helping children and young people contribute to decisions made about their lives and the running of the home.

Although there is a suitable admissions procedure this is not always implemented well to ensure care staff are aware of a child's specific individual needs. As a result children starting to use the home for short breaks do not always get their needs fully met. This issue has been addressed by the manager with the aim of improving how children experience the home when they first come for a visit. Children and young people are able to have a series of visits to the home before staying overnight or having longer stays. This helps them become more familiar and comfortable with a new environment at a pace that suits their needs.

Dates that children and young people stay at the home are planned in advance and notified to parents who have the opportunity to ask for specific dates if they need to. Careful thought is generally given to which groups of children and young people use the home at the same time. This is to minimise risks and help ensure needs can be met well and their experiences are positive.

Information about children and young people's assessed needs is not up to date and not well organised. As a result individual placement plans that should detail the support each child requires lack the necessary rigour and quality to ensure their needs are well met. The planned improvements to the admissions process includes plans to gather better information about a child's needs before they have their first visit to the home. Reviews of individual children's care are held with the placing authority. Parents are able to attend these meetings and their views and wishes are responded to.

The approach to including children and young people in what is going on and ensuring they have good opportunities for participating in decisions about their care is limited. This is because methods of communication are not fully embedded, there

is a lack of information in alternative formats that children may understand and placement plans are not of good quality. Staff do interact positively with children and young people, seek their views and promote choices but this is not thoroughly established as good care practice. Efforts have also been made to consult with parents about their views of the service with an aim to improve it. The last time parents completed a satisfaction survey was over a year ago and the results are now out of date.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home has a self-help unit designed to provide young people with opportunities to develop their independence and life skills, supporting their transition into adulthood. Staff work in conjunction with the placing authority to provide transition plans outlining the ongoing support individual young people will need. The self-help unit is not fully utilised. The planning of short breaks leads to the unit being empty on occasions. The additional provision of day care during the Summer holiday period compromised the ability to use this facility.

The home has recently been purpose built and designed to accommodate children and young people with a range of disabilities. All bedrooms are single with en suite facilities. There are ample bathing facilities that cater for individuals with physical disabilities. There is a very good range of facilities including two computer rooms, a sensory room, soft play room and outdoor play equipment. Throughout the home there is special equipment designed for use by children and young people with disabilities.

Little progress has been achieved since opening the home with regard to creating a homely atmosphere and environment. There are some pictures of children and young people enjoying various activities stuck to the walls in some parts of the home. Generally though, walls are bare and the home lacks a child friendly homely feel. The manager has planned to make improvements making a more homely environment.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision of a temporary manager in the Registered Manager's absence, initial improvements made and planned ones means that the management arrangements are judged as satisfactory.

There is detailed information about the home available to parents and social workers. Though this has been reviewed it does not accurately reflect practice in the home for example the use of closed circuit television for security and internally locked doors restricting access. There was no children's guide in formats appropriate to the age and understanding of children and young people who use the home to help them understand what to expect.

Staff have not been effectively supervised and their performance has not been appraised. The manager is aware of these shortfalls and has taken steps to improve the levels of supervision and start a system of staff appraisal. As a result children and young people have not benefitted from a staff team with good morale and motivation though this is improving under new management.

Staff are competent and experienced with nearly all staff having achieved the recommended qualification in caring for children and young people. The manager has improved the way staff training records are kept and has started to use this to plan for training that staff need.

There are sufficient numbers of care staff on duty to help make sure children and young people generally get the support they need. Overall staffing vacancies and sickness levels have impacted on the ability to maintain standards but new staff were soon to be interviewed to fill vacant posts.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. There is suitable care practice that helps ensure individual needs are met though this is not consistently the case. Attempts are made to ensure particular attention is paid to cultural and ethnic differences though sometimes efforts to promote diversity are superficial and not well planned. Children and young people are involved in a variety of cultural events throughout the year to help improve their understanding of the world around them. The majority of staff have not yet been trained in equality and diversity. Care records vary in the quality in which they reflect children's needs, progress and individuality.

Monitoring of the standards of care by monthly independent visitors on behalf of the registered provider has failed to identify shortfalls in the quality of care. Likewise the Registered Manager's monitoring of the standards of care has not been effective. This has been improved by the temporary manager who has clearly identified areas for improvement and acknowledges the shortfalls in meeting national minimum standards. Certain measures have already been put in place and there are plans for future improvements. This has lifted staff morale, staff are committed to improving the service, which will benefit children and young people who use it.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
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1	ensure there is a children's guide in formats appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of children which includes a summary of the home's Statement of Purpose, a summary of the complaints procedure and the address and telephone number of Ofsted (Regulation 4 (3) & (4))	31/01/2011
1	ensure the Statement of Purpose includes an accurate description of the use of the closed circuit television and of the key fobs to access individual bedrooms and communal areas of the home (Regulation 4 (1))	31/01/2011
22	ensure there are no measures of control that are excessive, in particular review the use of internal door locks and key fob system (Regulation 17 (1))	31/01/2011
28	ensure all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children receive food in adequate quantities that is wholesome and nutritious and has regard for their cultural, ethnic, individual backgrounds and choices (NMS 10.3)
- ensure all children have a clear, detailed and up to date health plan that includes all the areas required by this standard (NMS 12.2)
- ensure children know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of the home, in particular provide information about the complaints process in formats children will understand (NMS 16.1)
- ensure there are risk assessments in relation to the home's premises and grounds identifying any hazard and the action to be taken to eliminate risks or reduce them to an acceptable level (NMS 26.2)
- ensure the Registered Manager reviews the implementation and effectiveness of risk assessments in particular with regard to the quality of safety measures identified to reduce risks (NMS 26.3)
- ensure regular fire drills give all staff and children the opportunity to practice evacuating the building (NMS 26.8)
- ensure there are ample opportunities for children to participate in a range of appropriate activities and that they can develop their confidence and skills (NMS 15)
- ensure that each child's placement plan sets out clearly their assessed needs, the objectives of the placement, how these are to be met on a day to day basis and cover the areas set out in this minimum standard (NMS 2.1)
- ensure the opinions and views of parents and children are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis (NMS 8.4 and 8.6)
- ensure the daily life of the home provides young people with effective opportunities to make use of the self-help unit (NMS 6.7)
- ensure children enjoy homely accommodation (NMS 24)

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- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month covering the areas set out in this standard (NMS 28)
 - ensure all staff have their performance individually appraised and recorded at least annually showing the level of performance, targets for the coming year and agreed training needs to be met (NMS 28.7)
 - ensure all staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills to meet the needs of children in particular with respect to administration of buccal midazolam, PEG feeding and promotion of equality and diversity (NMS 31.1)
 - ensure that the welfare of children is effectively monitored. (NMS 32)