

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Mary Timms
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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 service provides short-break support for families with children who have learning difficulties who may also have a physical disability. The premises have been developed to provide appropriate accommodation and adaptations to support the children using this service. There are two adjacent lounge areas, a dining room, a kitchen, two bathrooms, appropriate office and storage space, a covered play area outside and garden areas. The home is situated in a residential area within travelling distance of a range of community resources.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection planned to review the service provided against identified key national minimum standards. While this is a continuing service it is the first inspection undertaken since a change of registration due to boundary changes within the local authority.

The service is judged as satisfactory with some good and outstanding aspects. Children receive a high standard of care which supports them to enjoy and achieve, to make choices and a positive contribution. The environment provides children with the adaptations and facilities they need in order to fully access the service. Children are cared for by caring and competent staff who are very experienced and understand how to support children with complex disabilities. This inspection notes two areas of weakness. Staff recruitment records do not always confirm that all required checks have been completed. Also there are occasions when children's needs change and plans are not updated promptly to ensure that care needs are appropriately structured.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable as this is the first inspection of this service since being re-registered.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to promote the good health of children using this short-break service. A thorough assessment of need is undertaken in consultation with parents and involved health professionals. Comments from parents include: 'Yes I am very confident that staff understand the health needs of my child.'

The service has strong links with community health professionals who support the provision of care, including writing key areas of care planning and by delivering specific areas of training for staff.

Children's health is supported by a safe and effective medication administration system. Staff undertake medication administration training. Medication is stored securely and a record is made on each occasion medication is administered to a child. A medication profile is held on file and an updated document is required from parents for each short break. While the operation of the system has been assessed by a community nurse, a written endorsement has not been retained on file to evidence any affirmations or comments to inform service development.

Children are provided with a varied and balanced diet. The majority of meals are home made and there is broad inclusion of fruit and vegetables within menu planning. Comments from children confirm that they are encouraged to eat healthily by 'cutting down on fizzy drinks and snacks'. Placement plans clarify children's individual dietary needs and restrictions and guide the support children require at mealtimes. Food safety systems are operated and staff undertake food hygiene training. Where appropriate children are supported and encouraged to learn basic food preparation skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected by safeguarding systems which are underpinned by policies and procedures and which are understood by staff. For example, individual risk assessments are developed in consultation with parents to inform care arrangements. Comments from parents include: 'I am confident that my child is safe when on a short break at this home'. Comments from social workers include: 'The service is very skilled in the care of very dependent and vulnerable children'.

Children are cared for in a safe environment. A range of health and safety monitoring checks are undertaken which ensure that potential hazards will be identified promptly. Service agreements are in place with contractors who monitor the safety and functioning of specialist adaptations and equipment. Fire safety is prioritised within safeguarding arrangements. A fire safety risk assessment informs care arrangements, children have individual evacuation plans and staff undertake fire safety training.

Staff understand the potential for bullying and spend time talking to children about bullying and what this may mean for them. While there have been no incidents of bullying since the last inspection, groupings of children have been adjusted on occasions to ensure that children feel safe at all times. Comments from parents include: 'I was very impressed by the way the service responded when my child said that they did not always get on with another child.'

Children are protected by the recruitment checks undertaken on staff employed on a

permanent basis. However, the employment of staff through an agency does not always ensure that required historical information is obtained to inform safe employment decisions. The identity of visitors is checked prior to them gaining access to the home.

Families are provided with guidance about the complaints procedures when they are first introduced to the service. Information guiding children how to raise a concern is on display using simple language and symbols. As a result children know how to raise a concern. Comments from parents confirm that they are 'confident that should they have a complaint that this would be addressed promptly'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive an excellent level of support and encouragement to enjoy and achieve. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the diverse needs of the children using this service. The service provides children with a very good range of adaptations and equipment to support their individual needs. A high standard of care is provided by competent and dedicated staff. The delivery of care prioritises the promotion of good outcomes for children. For example, children are supported to access community activities and resources, children are supported to develop new skills and to reach targets. Comments from staff include: 'The child is the centre of everything we do'. Parents are confident about the quality of support their child receives. Comments from parents include: 'Staff know my child well' and 'I am confident in them and their ability to care for my child'.

The primary responsibility for planning and maintaining children's educational needs remains with parents. However, the staff team work closely with parents and schools to ensure that educational plans are fully supported. Comments from staff include confirmation that they make regular visits to school settings and attend educational review meetings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and families are supported when they are first introduced to the service. Key members of staff visit the family home, families are encouraged to visit the service and to meet with staff to plan their child's care. Parents and children are provided with documented information about the service. As a result children and families understand the facilities and the quality of the service they can expect to receive. The Registered Manager and key workers maintain a high level of contact with families and placing social workers.

Placement plans are produced in consultation with parents, schools and health professionals. Comments from parents confirm that they are confident in the way the service assesses and plans for their child's needs. There is a system in place to

update plans as needs change and to review them on an annual basis. However, there are occasions when known changes to care needs are not updated promptly into the placement plan. This raises the potential that needs may go unmet.

Children are supported to make a positive contribution. Staff endeavour to create opportunities for children to make choices and to make their views known. Where appropriate, children are involved in the development of their placement plan. As a result children feel involved and consulted. Information is displayed around the home for children in an appropriate format. Comments from staff include: 'All children are encouraged to do things for themselves'. Children are supported to make their views known within a children's meeting known as the 'voice group'. For example, a recent meeting utilised pictures and magazines to aid children with very restricted communication abilities to make choices about new equipment. Children are involved in group activities. For example, children are currently involved in painting large murals which on completion are to be fixed to the rear garden fence.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The environment provides a light and cheerful atmosphere for children. The service provides suitable aids, adaptations and specialised equipment to ensure that the health and comfort needs of children are well met. For example, the play area includes a specialised bed with clear support sides enabling children with complex physical disabilities to be included and also to have a view of the garden area. A high standard of cleanliness is maintained and property maintenance needs are addressed promptly.

Children are supported to reach developmental targets and to learn new skills. Transition plans are initiated for children on reaching the age of 14 which set out current agreed goals. As a result children are supported to develop the appropriate level of skills and independence. Goals may be food preparation tasks or could be limited to supporting children to make a personal choice.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which sets out the services and facilities provided. Summarised information is reflected in a children's guide which is provided in an appropriate format to children and families at the referral stage.

The management team monitor care arrangements and the Registered Manager undertakes structured checks on records. However, there are occasions when placement plans have not been identified as needing to be updated to reflect changing needs. The service is also monitored by external managers who undertake monthly visits and report on the quality of care provided.

The Registered Manager is supported by an assistant manager who is suitably knowledgeable to deputise when required. Children are cared for by appropriate numbers of experienced and competent staff. The service has a well-developed training programme which is facilitated on set training days each year, supported by external trainers when necessary. Comments from staff include: 'I love working at this service knowing that when the children come for respite I will be able to make a difference.' Staff also say: 'Staff don't leave here because it is such a lovely place to work.' Staff confirm that they feel supported in their role by managers and feel equipped to meet the needs of children using the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children's individual needs are supported in line with agreed care arrangements. Staff are dedicated in the promotion of good outcomes and new opportunities for children. A recent development has been a display of information for children relating to children's rights and responsibilities. The board is also used to highlight issues regarding equality and diversity.

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
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to each member of staff employed to work in the home (Regulation 26(3) and Schedule 2)	30/12/2010
3	keep under review and revise individual placement plans as necessary. (Regulation 12(2))	30/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written guidance for the administration of medication clarifies the identified need and reflects the endorsement of an appropriate health professional to the practice of on occasions removing medication from the original container and placing into a secondary container prior to administering to children. (NMS 13)