

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Lynne Busby
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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 is a children's home. The home is registered to provide a service for up to six children and young people, male or female between the ages of five and 17 years old, who have a learning disability and may also have a physical disability.

The home offers a short term respite service only, no one is accommodated on a long term basis and one of the six places is used only for emergency respite. The home sometimes offers occasional day care, either planned or in emergencies.

The service is close to the local town centre. Local shops and public transport are easily accessible. There is a large car park for visitors, which is shared with other council premises.

The home is a single storey building with wheelchair access. There is one double and four single bedrooms, a bathroom, shower room, lounge, dining area, kitchen and playroom. Outside is an enclosed garden that has been developed into a play area and there is a sensory garden.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced inspection to assess key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for children and young people. The inspection took place over two days.

This is a good service with outstanding elements. The staff team is very experienced and have a child centred approach to meeting children's individual needs. They are knowledgeable about each child and there is a comprehensive placement plan which is followed in practice. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures to ensure children are safeguarded. Staff work closely with parents and health professionals to ensure children's health needs are fully met. Children have a positive experience when they stay at the home, with a range of activities available to them.

There is one recommendation which is to update the Statement of Purpose.

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager was asked to review the format of the system used to monitor matters in Schedule 6. This has been completed and now makes clear what checks have

been completed, with outcomes and any action taken. This is completed regularly and annually collated into a report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The responsibility for overall health needs remains with the parents as the children only spend a few nights at the home each month. The staff work closely with parents and other health professionals to ensure that children's health needs are closely monitored. The home has an arrangement with a local general practitioner for advice and emergency treatment. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate, this helps support children's health needs.

Staff are trained in administration of medications, first aid and specialist health tasks. Medications are safely stored in a locked cupboard and good systems are in place for safe administration. Any medications the staff administer are recorded clearly and accurately in each child's record, and balances of medications are monitored and recorded which provide a clear audit trail. There are limited non prescription medications held. The policies in place which are followed in practice provide an excellent safe and accountable system.

The food is nutritious and healthy and menus indicate that fresh ingredients are used. Menus are planned, taking into account children's individual special diets and individual tastes. Staff are trained in food hygiene to ensure all food is prepared safely. Children are actively encouraged to make choices at mealtimes. Staff assist children with meals in an unobtrusive manner and mealtimes are social occasions. There is an information board that sets out the menu pictorially so that children know what is available for each meal. This is excellent practice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff have a good understanding of promoting privacy and are sensitive to working with children when providing intimate care. Confidentiality is respected and all information is stored securely.

Complaints, child protection, behaviour management, unauthorised absences and health and safety are defined in policies, and the practice of staff is accountable. Parents are given information on how to make a complaint and there is information in the children's guide which is a pictorial format. There is also a 'grumbles' book where children can record or have recorded any concerns they have. This is regularly checked and responded to by the manager. There has been one complaint since the last inspection which was resolved. Therefore, complaints are well managed. The home has recently had a new sensory room and within this are cushions which have different expressions such as sad and happy. Children use these to show staff how they feel.

All the staff have had training in child protection. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the children's safety. Appropriate responses are made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The staff are vigilant and supervision is good to protect children from bullying. There is an anti-bullying policy which is in a format that children can understand. There is a policy in place if children go missing without authority. This has not been an issue for the home.

Staff work in a child centred manner and children are treated as individuals. Staff use distraction techniques, which promote positive behaviour. There is a record of restraints and these are only used as a last resort, and all have been appropriately recorded. Sanctions are rarely used but completed on an individual basis and appropriately recorded.

The home provides a safe environment for the children to live in. All maintenance is carried out and fire drills are held regularly and staff have attended fire awareness training. There are risk assessments completed for activities undertaken by the children, equipment used and for the building and grounds.

There is a system in place for recruitment and selection of staff. Some of the children have been involved in the recruitment and selection process. This is good practice. All checks are carried out prior to a staff member being employed. This provides robust systems to safeguard children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children receive very good individualised support appropriate to their needs. The staff promote personal, health, social and relationship issues with the children were appropriate. There is a key worker system and staff are knowledgeable about each child, particularly their individual communication needs. All staff have had training in non verbal communication styles. Staff complete a memory book with the children of their time and experiences whilst at the home.

Parents retain responsibility for the education of their children. However, staff visit the schools for meetings and to discuss ways of working with the children. This promotes consistency for the child and is good practice. The children bring a journal from school which gives the staff an overview of their day and staff help with any homework. Transport arrangements are in place to ensure children can get to and from school.

The home accesses services in the wider community including cinema, bowling and local parks. Children attend a local youth club held in a college, and staff also support children to maintain any activities they do at home, such as horse riding. This ensures continuity. In addition there are a variety of activities completed in the

home such as crafts, outside play and the sensory room. The staff are enthusiastic and motivated to offer children a wide range of experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of children concerned and take into account the existing group. The home is a respite unit so children and families are involved in the planning. The staff visit the children at home and then they can come to tea and stay overnight, so they are gradually introduced to the staff and other children. Staff work very sensitively with children who are visiting so that they have a positive experience which enables them to settle into the home. The parents continue to be fully involved in their care, and there is regular contact between parents and staff.

The placement plans are of good quality and are comprehensively written. The staff ensure the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day to day care of the children. The children have reviews which are attended by staff who produce a report. Recommendations from reviews are followed in practice to ensure children's needs continue to be met.

Staff keep parents fully informed of any events that occur while their child is at the home. Staff also have coffee mornings and summer fetes which gives them further opportunities to seek views about the operation of the service.

Staff consult with the children about decisions which are likely to effect their daily lives, using their preferred method of communication. None of the children are assumed unable to communicate their views. Whilst many of the children have no verbal communication, the staff know the children well and are familiar with their different ways of communicating. The home seeks children's views through individual key workers, at reviews and through regular children's meetings. There is an advocate who visits the home. Of particular note is that some of the young people attend a group, which is held once a week. This is a consultation group for a wider group of disabled children, who come together to express their views about issues that are important to them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The children are supported by the staff where possible to make the transition to adulthood. Plans for some young people include targets such as preparing snacks, which help children develop life skills. The daily life of the home provides opportunities for children to complete these tasks, where they are identified, given the child's age and understanding. There are presently no children on transition plans. However, staff will accompany young people and parents, to see adult services during the transition period.

The premises are well maintained and provide a 'homely' atmosphere. The home has a range of specialist equipment to ensure all children's needs are met including ceiling hoists adapted baths and showers and beds. This assists with the safe movement and transfer of children. Staff have training in its use. Children have their own rooms which are brightly decorated. The home have recently had a new sensory room which has proved popular with all the children. Communal areas include a lounge dining room and a playroom. The grounds are secure and contain a good range of play equipment and a sensory garden.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a Statement of Purpose that outlines the functions of the home and is available to parents and other professionals. However, it does not reflect that the electronic surveillance system, such as door alarms, is used occasionally for some children. Therefore, this does not fully comply with the aims of the home. There is a children's guide that is bright and colourful and pictorial which is appropriate for the needs of the children. This is also available in other formats. There are policies and procedures that are accessible to staff.

The home is well run with an experienced manager and staff team. There are a number of staff who have achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This meets the minimum standard of having 80% qualified staff. In addition, senior staff are working towards completing a NVQ at Level 4. New staff complete an induction within the probationary period. There is a range of training available and this ensures staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children who attend the home. There is a staff rota that indicates that there are enough staff on duty to meet the needs of the children. This changes depending on the children accommodated. Staff are supported through regular supervision, staff meetings and annual appraisals.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff have had training in equality and diversity and demonstrate an awareness so they can give children opportunities to reach their full potential. Most documentation reflects how staff will meet individual needs and takes into account race culture, religion, linguistic background and disability.

Senior managers undertake monthly visits to ensure standards are maintained in the home. A report is completed by the manager that actions any issues raised. In addition the manager regularly monitors key records such as sanctions and restraints. The home has a written development plan which is regularly reviewed.

Children's individual case files are confidentially stored. Their individual case records reflect their development and progress and files are well organised.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure the Statement of Purpose reflects the electronic surveillance system used such as door alarms. (NMS 1.1)