

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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

The home is registered to provide accommodation and care for up to 12 children, boys and girls, between the ages of six and 17. Children who use the home stay there for 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 support their transition to independence.

There are 12 single bedrooms all with an 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 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/diner in the self-help unit as well as the main 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 interim inspection to check both the quality of the safeguarding arrangements and compliance with the required improvements from the last inspection.

There has been considerable progress to comply with a large number of improvements needed at the last inspection. Half of these have been completed fully and six recommendations are still being worked on. These are carried over into this report. There is one additional recommendation and two statutory requirements.

There are suitable outcomes for children using the home so that they are safe, free from bullying, enjoy their time in the home and have their welfare promoted. Written risk assessments and fully developed individual care plans are still not accurate, up to date and of good quality for all children. As a result there is over reliance on staff knowledge about children's changing needs to help ensure they are looked after in a safe way.

Management arrangements are satisfactory. Young people benefit from the hard work and commitment of the staff and manager that compensates for the shortfalls in meeting some minimum standards. Management of the home ensures outcomes are at least satisfactory.

The overall quality rating remains satisfactory and as a result of this inspection the registered provider is required to: ensure staff appraisals are monitored for quality; continue to improve individual placement and health plans for all children; improve the effectiveness of the self help unit; improve the homeliness of the décor around the home; improve the openness and transparency with which internal restrictions are used, agree them with the placing authority and make sure they are only for safety reasons; and ensure staff receive adequate training and supervision.

There has been an acting manager at the home for nearly six months who is not registered with Ofsted to manage this home. The registered provider is failing to uphold the legal duty to ensure the person managing the home becomes registered with Ofsted.

Improvements since the last inspection

The staff and acting manager have made good progress in addressing the numerous shortfalls in minimum standards and regulations.

There is a new colourful children's guide that uses a range of pictures, signs and symbols to help all children understand what to expect from the home. This includes information about how to complain if children are unhappy with their care. Staff go through the guide with new children to assist in their understanding of it.

The Statement of Purpose for the home has been amended to include information for parents and placing social workers about the closed circuit television (cctv) system and use of the key-fob system which impacts on children's ability to access all parts of the home. What is not clear in care policies, placement plans and risk assessments is how restrictions caused by locked doors to certain parts of the home have been agreed with the placing authority and are used only to safeguard children's welfare. It was an improvement to see that some children are able to have a key fob to gain access to different areas of the home. In this respect the use of excessive control through locked doors to manage children's behaviour has improved.

Staff appraisals are now up to date and the amount of staff supervision has improved though there are still shortfalls in relation to the required minimum standard. Few appraisal records were available for inspection and the manager has not yet signed off all staff appraisals as a means of ensuring their quality. Some staff have had some of the required training highlighted as needed at the past inspection. Further training to include all staff has been planned for and the records of staff training needs have improved.

There is better provision of diets to ensure all children are provided with wholesome nutritious food that meets their cultural, ethnic, individual backgrounds and choices.

Not all children have an up-to-date health plan making it clear what their needs are and how they will be met when staying at the home. Work is under way to improve the quality of children's individual placement plans. But not all plans are accurate, up to date and of good quality. As a result there is over reliance on staff knowledge about children to ensure their needs are met suitably and in a safe way. There has been some improvement in relation to monitoring of epileptic seizures.

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 are in place. The manager has also reviewed the implementation of risk assessments and prioritised the completion of new risk assessments in relation to children's individual needs. Both of these improvements are helping to keep children safe.

There are better records of fire drills so as to monitor which staff and children have been able to practice a drill and identify those that still need to.

There are better opportunities for children to participate in a range of activities but the numbers and needs of children using the home at the time of inspection had a negative impact on this. This was particularly noted in relation to the effectiveness with which young people in the self-help unit were being supported to develop independence skills.

Plans are in place to ascertain the views of parents and children on a regular basis. These have yet to be implemented or have an impact in influencing how the home is run.

Monitoring of children's welfare by the manager and registered provider has improved and is of adequate quality. This helps to ensure children receive suitable care that meets their individual needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The arrangements to keep children and young people free from harm and help keep them safe are satisfactory. Staff work hard and are committed to ensuring children are safe when they stay at the home and there has been some progress in complying with the requirements from the last inspection. Some aspects of practice are still only

adequate and limit outcomes for children to satisfactory.

Risk assessments about children's behaviour, known and likely activities, the potential for bullying and abuse are still recorded in varying quality. For some children these are of good quality and this aspect of care practice has been prioritised for improvement since the last inspection. This helps ensure staff know what safety measures are needed to ensure children are safe. However there are still a significant amount of children for whom the risk assessments are out of date and are only of adequate quality. There is an over reliance on staff knowledge of young people's needs instead of having thorough, good quality records of individual needs detailing what support is required to promote children's welfare and keep them safe.

Some children now have key fobs that provides them with better access to all parts of the home as the fobs automatically unlock internally locked doors to different communal areas. The reasons these children are given a fob and other children are not is not clear in care policies, risk assessments or individual placement plans. There is no clear agreement with the placing authority regarding internal restrictions and it is not clear that they are in place only as a safeguarding measure to promote the safety and welfare of children. As a result some children may have their freedom in the home unnecessarily restricted.

Risk assessments in relation to the home's premises and grounds and the impact on children's safety are now in place. This is enhanced by close staff supervision helping to minimise risks. Such staffing levels also allow for the opportunity for staff to act promptly if there is any inappropriate behaviour and minimises the potential for bullying.

Staff receive guidance and training in positive behaviour management strategies and despite the quality of records about individual children staff do have a sound knowledge of their individual needs. Children are helped to develop positive behaviour through the fostering of good relationships with staff and the emphasis upon praise and encouragement. Sanctions and physical intervention are not used within the home which is good practice, it is recognised that children will not understand the reasons for such measures. Staff however are trained to physically intervene as a last resort only to protect the safety of children.

Staff have safeguarding training and know what to do with any allegations or suspicions of abuse and harm to keep children safe. Children rarely go missing from this home. Staff also work well together with other professionals, in particular with schools, to promote the well-being and development of children. Children do not experience any bullying and staff encourage them to get along with each other.

Parents know how to complain and there is better information for children explaining their rights and what to do if they were unhappy with their care. Action taken in response to complaints indicates that complaints are addressed fairly and improvements put in place to avoid the issue occurring again.

Children benefit from having their privacy and dignity respected especially when

being supported with intimate personal care. A choice of bathrooms is available to meet the individual needs of all children and all bedrooms also have en suite facilities. An excellent range of aids helps ensure the dignity of children with disabilities is promoted. All children have their own bedrooms when they stay with door locks that can be overridden in case of an emergency and staff gain permission before entering. There is guidance for staff about provision of appropriate personal care and they know how to follow this. Personal records about children's care are stored safely to maintain the required degree of confidentiality.

There are regular fire drills to practice evacuating the building safely and record keeping has improved so that it is clear which staff and children still need the opportunity to practice this. Staff working at the home have received fire safety training. Records of maintenance and safety checks are up to date to help ensure children benefit from a safe environment.

There are good procedures to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to work with vulnerable children.

All visitors to the home are supervised and recorded on entry and exit, to ensure their safety and that of the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The acting manager with support from staff has made substantial improvements in a number of areas since the last inspection to improve outcomes for children. However change has been slow and in some areas there is little visible impact. Overall the management of the home is of suitable quality.

The quality of information about the home has been reviewed and amended so it is

accurate and available in different formats for children with communication difficulties. This helps ensure children, parents and social workers have access to suitable information about the home so they know what to expect.

The level of staff supervision and training is improving but does not yet meet minimum standards. More training is planned for the coming year to ensure all staff have the training they need to meet the individual needs of all children using the home. All staff have now had an annual appraisal identifying their training and development needs so they are better equipped with the skills and knowledge to care appropriately for children. The manager has not yet checked the quality of these appraisals to ensure they are all of an equal and suitable standard.

Management arrangements of the home are still temporary. The current manager is not registered with Ofsted to manage this home. There have been improvements since the last inspection in the way the home is managed and staff morale is also better. However the long-term nature of the temporary management situation is not conducive to securing the necessary sustained improvements required to ensure children benefit from good outcomes.

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
33	ensure that reviews of the quality of care include monitoring the quality of staff appraisals (Regulation 34 (1) (a) Schedule 6)	27/05/2011
34	ensure the manager of the home is registered with Ofsted (Care Standards Act 2000 Section 11)	30/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children have a clear, detailed and up-to-date health plan that includes all the areas required by this standard (NMS 12.2)
- 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 daily life of the home provides young people with effective

opportunities to make use of the self-help unit (NMS 6.7)

- ensure that restrictions (because of the key fob system) on a child's normal movement within the home are used only in relation to where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan and only where necessary to safeguard and promote that child's welfare (NMS 23.5)
- ensure children enjoy homely accommodation (NMS 24)
- 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 28.2)
- 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)