

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC406505
Inspection date	26/07/2011
Inspector	Simon Morley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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 generally stay there for 35 days per year. These days are spread over 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 adulthood.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

Well planned care that supports the diverse needs of children and young people receiving a short break service starts with the referral and assessment process. By the time children and young people come for their first stay there are good plans in place for their care to ensure their experience is a positive one.

There is inconsistency in the use of short break plans and how they are monitored to help ensure they are accurate and used effectively. Also strategies aimed to reduce the incidence of any negative behaviour are not fully developed and included in the short break plan.

As far as possible the views of children and young people are ascertained about the home and quality of their care. A variety of communication methods are used to help children and young people make their own decisions and influence the running of the home. Parents concerns are not always effectively followed up as a way of improving the service and helping ensure the welfare of children and young people.

Relationships between children, young people and staff are good though the quality of care is hampered by the amount of staff vacancies and numbers of staff working each shift. There has been another change in manager with the third manager in 12 months now responsible for running the home. This is not helping promote effective management and continuous improvement.

Children and young people are safe in the home and benefit from a good range of opportunities. The home is designed and built with plenty of aids and adaptations to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. Internal locked doors restrict

children and young people's access to all parts of the home. This impacts on their freedom to make full use of the home's facilities.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
2000	ensure the manager of the home is registered with Ofsted (Care Standards Act 2000 Section 11)	31/10/2011
12 (2001)	ensure that short break plans set out how a child accommodated in the home will have his/her welfare safeguarded, in particular set out detailed specific strategies that have been agreed to reduce the incidences of any negative behaviour exhibited by the child (Regulation 12)	31/10/2011
16 (2001)	ensure there is prompt referral to the local authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child accommodated in the home and keep records of the action taken in response (Regulation 16, (2) (b) & (d))	31/08/2011
25 (2001)	ensure that at all times, having regard to the size of the home, the number and needs of children accommodated, and the need to safeguard and promote children's welfare, there are a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the home (Regulation 25)	31/10/2011
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated a record which includes a copy of any plan of care of the child prepared by the placing authority and a copy of the short break plan (Regulation 28, Schedule 3)	30/09/2011
30 (2001)	ensure any oral notification made in accordance with this regulation is confirmed in writing (Regulation 30 (3))	30/09/2011
34 (2001)	ensure systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the home improve the quality of care provided. (Regulation 34)	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that restrictions on a child's normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the

parents. These restrictions do not impose restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)

- ensure there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, identifying planned changes in the operation or resources of the home (NMS 15.1)
- ensure each child's short break plan is monitored by a key worker in the home who ensures the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child during each short break. (NMS 25.2).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children and young people clearly enjoy their short breaks at the home. This was clearly seen throughout the inspection and consistently commented on by different stakeholders. This is a credit to the commitment and dedication of staff.

Individual needs are generally well met. Personal care is provided sensitively and promotes children and young people's privacy and dignity. Health is promoted well through balanced and nutritious meals that take account of children and young people's likes, diverse needs and wishes of parents. There are good links with specialist health professionals including the local community team for learning disabilities, dieticians, epilepsy and community nurses. This ensures that children and young people continue to receive good health care during their short breaks.

All children and young people regardless of their ability are actively involved in a wide range of purposeful activities both in the home, local and wider community. It is a notable strength of the service that children and young people are provided with a far wider variety of opportunities than they may experience at home.

Part of the home is a dedicated self-help unit. This is used to support young people to develop their independence skills as far as possible in accordance with their needs and abilities. Young people can cook, bake, grow fruit and vegetables, help with chores and learn to wash their clothes.

All children and young people have very good levels of school attendance. Transport is provided to help children get to and from school. There is good integration between care staff and the schools different children attend. This helps promote good outcomes and consistency in the care children and young people receive. This is particularly important for those children and young people who struggle with changes to their routine.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **satisfactory**.

The registered provider, which is also the local authority, is not consistently providing short break care plans for children and young people using the home. Where these are not provided staff use assessment information to develop their own care plans. Additional specific care plans are also provided by health professionals. These inform staff how to support children with specific health needs such as epilepsy and percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) feeding. Some children with complex needs and communication difficulties also have a communication passport. These are easy to read, informative person-centred documents that help staff understand a child or young person's individual needs and their methods of non-verbal communication. In a minority of cases these are enhanced by an individual life story DVD. Some staff did not know these existed. The information in these different plans covers a wide range of diverse individual needs including cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability.

The majority of these plans are kept stored in the office for reference. On a daily basis staff use a shortened pen profile and risk assessments to inform them of how to support individual children and young people's needs. Though pen profiles are reviewed regularly they are in reality an abbreviated care plan. There is a reliance on using these as well as staff familiarity with a child's needs. This is not the most effective way of delivering care and can lead to mistakes. In contrast the short break care plans detail all the essential information needed to support a child in one document.

Staff are familiar with the different ways children and young people communicate. Staff respond well to children and young people and are sensitive to gestures, facial expressions and different tones of voice. Some children and young people are supported to use signs and symbols to communicate. If necessary specialist staff qualified in signing are used to support individuals. By being familiar with the different ways children and young people communicate staff support them to influence the running of the home and make decisions about their care.

A series of open days are planned with the aim to promote better participation of parents in the running of the home. The first one has taken place with approximately 20 families taking part. As a result there are planned improvements to the service. These are to ensure better communication to parents about their children's stays at the home and make sure they go home with the right clothes. Future days are planned to improve the level of participation by having a range of professionals talk about relevant issues to parents, for example, the transition to adult services and benefits.

There are safe arrangements for ensuring children and young people receive the medication they need at the right times. The procedures for administering medication have been reviewed and improved since the last inspection. A similar system has recently been set up to ensure the arrangement for PEG feeding are equally as safe.

There are good links, integration and communication with the schools children and young people attend. This helps promote consistency in the delivery of care across

settings and the sharing of good practice.

The home is purpose built with a wide range of aids and adaptations to support children and young people with disabilities. Facilities include specially adapted bathrooms, playground and kitchen, overhead tracking, wheelchair accessibility, sensory room and garden, ball pool, internal trampoline, gym, two computer rooms and three lounges. Children and young people regardless of their need benefit from the facilities and staff support to enjoy a range of purposeful activities.

Access to all the home's facilities is hampered by internally locked doors. The aim of these is to help keep children and young people safe. It is not clear that these restrictions are agreed with the local authority and parents. These restrictions affect everyone but some children and young people are given a key fob. If able to use the fob these children and young people can unlock certain doors for example to their bedrooms or one of the computer rooms. It is not clear how an individual child or young person is allowed a key fob and support to use it is inconsistent. Depending on an individual's ability to communicate, staff can be asked to unlock doors or children and young people will have to wait for staff to initiate use of a particular room.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **satisfactory** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Staff are trained in child protection and know how to report any concerns they have about children and young people's welfare. No child protection referrals have been made to the local authority since the last inspection. However, parents concerns about the welfare of their children during short breaks have not been effectively managed to ensure the safety of everyone using the service.

Efforts are made to ensure children and young people having short breaks together are compatible and do not pose risks to each other from their behaviour. Staff also work hard to closely supervise children and young people at all times. As a result there are no incidents of bullying and no absences of children and young people from the home.

Staff interact well with children and young people and strive to build up good positive relationships. There is an effective approach to encouraging children and young people to behave well through direct communication, praise and rewards. Written risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place to inform staff how to keep children and young people safe. Strategies are not well developed in some cases only telling staff to 'supervise closely' or 'direct to another room'.

Staff do not use sanctions if children and young people do not behave well. There is good understanding that most children and young people using the service would not understand a sanction and this would not be an appropriate measure. Similarly there has been no use of physical intervention to keep children and young people safe. Staff have been trained to do this if needed. The support provided to children and young people and amount of space in the home promotes safety and avoids the need to physically intervene.

A thorough recruitment process is in place to ensure only appropriate people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **satisfactory**.

The home is satisfactorily managed to ensure children and young people are safe, receive a suitable quality of care and benefit from good outcomes.

The statutory actions and some of the recommendations from the last inspection have not been met. There is some progress in meeting some of the recommendations. Internal décor has improved since the last inspection making the environment more homely and further work is planned as it still needs to improve. There is better use of the self-help unit for those children and young people who benefit from developing their independent life skills. The manager is still not registered with Ofsted, internal monitoring by the manager has not improved and recommended training for staff has not yet been provided. Failure to meet these shortfalls identified at the last inspection has not been judged to impact significantly enough on outcomes for children and young people to warrant an inadequate judgement.

There has been another change in the manager of the home, the new manager has been in post a month and is the third manager in a 12 month period. This does not provide good management continuity or help improve the quality of the service for children and young people. Quality monitoring by both the manager and registered provider is basic focusing mainly on management systems, processes and record keeping. Internal quality reports do not provide a good overview of the experiences of children and young people and the outcomes they benefit from.

Though the manager has some good ideas for improvement there is no written development plan aimed to improve the quality of the service with clear aims, objectives and timescales. The registered provider voiced a commitment to improving the service. This is evident from very recent changes to the senior management team and additional support for the manager of the home.

Staff feel better supported by the new manager and think the organisation of the home is improving. Stakeholders commented that the staff and manager are willing to listen and make improvements. There is an improved commitment to listening to others, learning from any mistakes and improving practice.

There are a large number of vacant staffing hours from unfilled posts and sickness. The remaining staff are committed to working overtime and there is regular use of agency staff. Current staffing is not sufficient for the home to operate effectively at full capacity. During the inspection the registered provider voiced a commitment to both fill vacant posts and increase the amount of staff on duty.

Training recommended for staff at the last inspection has not been provided but has been booked to take place. The management of training has not ensured all staff are fully equipped to meet the full range of care needs children and young people have.

Significant events relating to the welfare of children and young people have been notified to parents and the appropriate authorities. Recent verbal notifications made to Ofsted have not been confirmed in writing. The manager has however, taken appropriate action following incidents to keep children and young people safe.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.