

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037986
Inspection date	12/01/2012
Inspector	Gavin Thomas
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/08/2011
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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 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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a short-break unit which provides day care and residential short breaks for children and young people with learning disabilities. It is owned and managed by a local council. There are 35 children and young people of either gender who currently use this service.

The home is registered to provide overnight accommodation for a maximum of 5 children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18 years at any one time. Additional numbers of children and young people use the service during the day only, as determined in the Statement of Purpose.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good** progress.

The previous full inspection took place on 15 August 2011. At that inspection, one requirement and one recommendation were made. These were in relation to the content of the Statement of Purpose and fire safety arrangements respectively. Extensive work has been carried out in addressing these matters, particularly the fire safety arrangements.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated. This document now provides up-to-date information about the age range, gender, and numbers of young people using this service. The contact details for Ofsted are now included in the complaints section of the Statement of Purpose. These updates fulfil the requirements of what is legally required in the Statement of Purpose.

Substantial work has been done in improving fire safety arrangements, particularly at night. All staff have participated in fire safety refresher training. This included a simulation of evacuation procedures in the dark. The management team are satisfied that this learning experience has broadened staff's thinking and approaches to fire safety in all eventualities. Staff feedback from this training was so positive that training of this nature is likely to be repeated more frequently. Fire safety records show that some young people have taken part in a recent fire drill after dark. This did not cause any distress to young people at the time.

The DVD version of the children and young people's guide is now finalised. This DVD is interactive throughout with young people, staff and family members participating. The guide shows the extent of young people's involvement in in-house and external activities, what the premises have to offer and the varying types of support young people can expect. Young people's testimonies are indicative of the enjoyment, fulfilment and benefits they gain from using this service. These are echoed by parents also featured on the DVD.

An area of the garden has improved significantly in recent months. The trampoline is sunk into the ground, which makes it more accessible to children and young people with physical disabilities. The area surrounding the trampoline now has a more child-friendly covering. This area is still 'work in progress,' with plans to introduce flower beds and seating areas for young people's enjoyment.

Management and staff are persistent in their approach towards supporting young people through difficult situations. In particular, at times when young people express their needs through unusual and unpredicted behaviours. Staff are consistent in how they work with young people, young people's families and other agencies such as schools. The extent of this work helps identify and modify support strategies and intervention. The quality of records and the effectiveness of staff observations contribute immensely to these processes. These also help influence changes to young people's care in various settings, including their home environments.

Staff are proactive and responsive to young people's assessed needs and continuity of care, for example, excellent progress is being made in working with adult services. This process is still evolving. However, the extent of communication between this and other services is helping to avoid gaps in young people's care after they have moved on. Similarly, staff work very closely with other professionals, including the Speech and Language Therapist, on key matters such as communication systems. In doing so, staff are effective in how they use these opportunities, together with their observations, for improving outcomes for individual young people.

The monitoring and supervision of the service are thorough. For example, the management team is extremely efficient in responding to incidents. This proactive approach benefits everyone and often results in other areas of review. For instance, when necessary, risk assessments are updated, learning and development opportunities are facilitated for staff or lines of enquiry are instigated. The examples of work undertaken in response to incidents since the last inspection show how young people's safety and welfare are central to all aspects of this service.

Young people's views and wishes are respected, and where possible, these are acted upon. For example, young people are currently organising a ball. In recent months, young people have also participated in a broad range of activities both in and outside of the home. Photographic images and art displays in the home show the happiness on young people's faces and the progress young people are making during their short breaks. Staff encourage and support young people in using alternate forms of communication for expressing their wishes, feelings and needs. When necessary, these methods are changed or adjusted in consultation with parents and professionals. Staff help young people progress and develop in a number of ways, often relating to very specific individual and personal needs. For example, staff are patient and persistent when supporting young people through transitional issues, and in responding to young people's gestures and expressions when staying away from home. There are exceptional examples of young people's progress and achievements in tolerating extended periods of time away from home in recent months.

The management and staff never doubt young people's abilities and are continuously seeking different ways of supporting young people's potential, development and progress. In doing so, young people make good use of in-house facilities but they also venture out into the community, taking part in a broad range of purposeful activities. The emphasis placed on personalised care is exceptional and flexible. This includes staff ratios and deployment of staff when young people are experiencing difficulties in expressing their needs, wishes and feelings. Staff are very positive about their roles and responsibilities. They also speak confidently about the quality of training and support they receive. In turn, this contributes to a very keen and motivated workforce. Communication within the staff team is excellent and this is also evidenced in the quality of written records.

One recommendation is identified from this inspection. All types of physical intervention are recorded, including those which only involve redirecting a young person. The various records completed, including physical restraint and incident records are detailed, informative and countersigned. However, the duration of intervention is not recorded as explicitly in the restraint record as in other records.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- update the restraint record to include the duration of any form of physical intervention. (NMS 3 and Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes para 2.91)