

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	21/02/2012
Inspector	Pete Hylton
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	02/06/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by the local authority. It provides short breaks for no more than eight children and young people at any one time, aged over four years and who have a learning disability.

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.

Progress

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

This home was judged to be outstanding at the last inspection. No requirements or recommendations were made.

The home continues to offer an excellent short break service to children and their families. Children continue to make excellent progress whilst staying at the home. Where young people have struggled to maintain educational placements, the home has worked closely with parents and schools to support regular attendance. This in turn has led to improved outcomes for children.

Staff provide regular outreach work for children and families. This helps families to provide continuous care to children and helps the staff to understand the often complex needs of the children using the home for short breaks. Excellent communication between parents, carers and the home ensures that all relevant matters are shared. Short breaks are carefully planned and children are actively supported to choose their favourite toys, activities and bedroom, where appropriate to do so.

Children are kept safe by a vigilant staff team. The staff team are experienced, qualified and well managed. Children's safety is given high priority and the physical environment is appropriately safe and secure. The use of electronic monitoring devices ensures that children are adequately monitored throughout the night. This means that night care staff are alerted to children leaving their bedrooms and can provide appropriate support. Although parents, carers and children are aware of their use, there is no written policy governing the use of such measures in the home. This does not impact on the outcomes for children.

The manager confirmed that plans to build further accommodation are in progress and this will further improve the service given to children. There are no current plans to redecorate the home although some areas need attention. For example, there are walls which have torn wallpaper and some window and door frames are damaged. Maintenance is regularly carried out and this will be further enhanced once the home completes the recruitment process for a dedicated operative for this task. A recommendation has therefore been made. The manager continues to seek ways to further improve the service given to children. Early intervention with families and an increase in outreach work are two examples of the manager's plans for developing further the service.

There have been few episodes of restraint since the last inspection. Where restraint does occur, it is appropriately and sensitively handled. The views of children, along with all other required information, are accurately recorded in records kept by the home. Similarly, where sanctions are applied to children, these are fair, consistent and the views of children help the manager to establish the effectiveness of such measures. The manager has an excellent overview of events happening in the home. Regular monitoring of the home ensures that the quality of care remains outstanding. The manager rigorously checks all records and addresses any shortfalls. This ensures that children's records are up to date, accurate and appropriately recorded.

Equality and diversity issues are positively addressed by the staff team. All children benefit from being able to make appropriate choices using their preferred communication methods. For example, the menu is displayed in symbol format. This enables children to choose their meals. Furthermore, all staff photographs are prominently displayed to show children which staff will be working in the home. Where cultural needs are identified, the staff team are equipped to provide the necessary care and support.

The recent purchase of new play equipment has significantly enhanced the outside environment. Children benefit from a wide selection of age appropriate and accessible equipment. Children were actively involved in the sourcing of this equipment and all children enjoy playing outside on the new apparatus. Children were observed to be happy and relaxed in their surroundings. A range of enjoyable activities are provided for them to engage in. High staffing levels mean that children are able to enjoy a variety of community based activities. For example, children regularly enjoy attending local sports and youth clubs. Children have also benefitted from camping, regular day trips and a holiday. The staff are committed to providing

opportunities for children to broaden their experiences. Staff are extremely caring and committed to supporting the children using the service.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that where specific measure, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures. (NMS 10.5)

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)*.