

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040641
Inspection date	27 July 2010
Inspector	Gavin Thomas
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	15 January 2010
--------------------------------	-----------------

© Crown copyright 2010

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.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 home forms part of a local authority's children's services provision for young people and children with disabilities. It is a five bedded detached house situated in a residential area close to a busy town centre and other local amenities. Off-road parking is provided for a small number of vehicles. This is a respite provision for young people with learning difficulties. Young people may also have associated physical disabilities. Some of the resources provided include a sensory room, a passenger lift to the first floor and a spacious dining room which is also used for play activities. There is an enclosed rear garden with swings and a shed for the storage of play equipment including a sand pit.

The home aims to promote and advocate children's rights, enabling them to enjoy a full and normal life during their time away from home. Currently, there are 25 young people accessing this service. A total of three young people were having respite at different parts of the day during this inspection. The young people were also taking part in a range of community-based activities.

Summary

This was a key unannounced inspection and all of the key national minimum standards were assessed. Some additional standards were also taken into account.

Time was spent intermittently with the young people during the inspection. One young person when asked, agreed that this is a 'good' home. Parents and an educational professional who completed surveys for this inspection made very glowing remarks about the quality of the service. Parents made reference to the quality of staff and one said 'We would be lost without them'. One young person who completed a survey with assistance, indicated their satisfaction with the service. For example, the young person said that they like staying at the home and enjoy the activities.

The provisions of this service are constantly developing, improving and evolving. Some of these recent features include the implementation of the quality assurance system, the appointment of staff as 'champions' and staff training initiatives.

Staff say that the young people's needs are always top priority. They compliment each other with reference to through shift planning and team work. Management is strong and accessible at all times including on call arrangements.

This service is judged as good overall but there are some outstanding features which strengthen the outcomes for the young people. Actions and recommendations identified from this inspection are mainly in relation to systems already in place.

One recent admission raises questions and concerns about the suitability of the placement. However, staff supported the young person to the best of their ability. They also worked well with external professionals to help contain the young person's behavioural needs and maximise safety for everyone for the duration of the young person's stay. The high-risk situations presented during this brief period are not representative of the usual quality of care. Generally, the young people enjoy a much more calming and safe environment provided by an experienced and well trained staff team.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the registered provider was asked to consider the implementation of three recommendations. Two recommendations were in relation to behavioural management policies and one was about fire safety.

The policy on physical intervention has not been updated to include a young person's right to be examined within 24 hours following an incident of physical intervention. Restraint procedures have also not been updated to include a young person's right to have their views recorded and the option of signing incident records. The policies and procedures are widely used by the local authority. However, individual incident records cover the two points previously recommended.

The frequency of testing the fire call points did improve for a while but according to records, this has not been maintained in recent months. This has been acknowledged and work is being done to review various aspects of fire safety. This includes the recording and testing of the call points.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff are creative in supporting young people in making food choices through alternate methods of communication. The types of methods include a mixture of pictures, symbols and words. The meals offered to young people are varied and include a good selection of meats, fish, vegetables and fruits. One parent describes the food as being 'homemade' and 'delicious'. Another parent says that when required, foods are prepared to the correct consistency for the young people. Staff are also commended by parents for ensuring that drinks are always available for the young people. Meals are serviced in sociable surroundings with sufficient staff to interact and assist the young people. Although some are not able to communicate their choices verbally, staff ensure that dietary records are kept up to date. This means that young people can enjoy their favourite foods and snacks during their stay.

Staff work exceptionally well with parents, schools and medical professionals regarding the young people's health. The quality of medical records, correspondence and placement planning are indicative of this work carried out. Staff attend relevant training specific to the health needs of the young people. This ensures that staff are kept abreast of procedures such as the administration of buccal midazolam. One parent says that they are very happy with the way in which staff meet their child's health needs. The example given, is the staff's ability to manage the young person's continence needs.

Sound procedures are in place for the receipt, storage, administration and recording of medications. This is endorsed through appropriate training which staff are required to attend. The system in place for handing over medications between staff and parents on behalf of the young people is effective in practice. This means that all medications are accounted for. Overall, medication records, including the controlled drugs register, are kept up to date when medications are administered or not. However, on the very rare occasion, the records have not been fully completed. This means that it is not possible to know if the medications were administered or not.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people enjoy the benefits of having separate bedrooms during their stay. A range of policies and procedures are also in place for safeguarding their privacy and dignity. In practice, staff do not disclose or discuss information inappropriately in front of the young people. Dedicated rooms are provided for handovers and shift planning takes place away from the young people. These meetings are conducted professionally and with respect for the young people. Appropriate facilities are available for the storage of confidential records. Sufficient office space and a conference room is provided for meetings.

A complaints procedure is in place and accessible to parents, stakeholders and members of the public. The service has received almost no complaints in recent times. Parents and carers are the main advocates for the young people. However, a simplified version of the complaints procedure is in place for the young people to use. It is likely that the majority of young people would require assistance from adults if they wanted to raise a concern or complaint. One young person who completed a survey said that they would tell a member of staff if they were unhappy.

Staff are good at implementing safeguarding procedures. They also attend a variety of training courses relating to safeguarding. These include 'domestic abuse' and 'what to do if a child has been abused'. Good quality records are kept of matters relating to the young people's safety, for example, body maps and chronology reports. The links established between staff, safeguarding professionals and social workers also contributes to the young people's safety. There were extreme safeguarding issues as a result of an emergency admission within recent months. However, correct procedures were put into place by the management of the home to avoid and minimise any negative impact on the other young people.

Bullying is not seen as an issue at this home. All of the young people have various forms of learning disabilities. Staff work hard to create a happy atmosphere and one which is relaxed and harmonious. Staff are also skilled at helping young people form friendships and interact safely during their stay. Where appropriate, information about young people keeping themselves safe is simplified. This is presented in a mixture of words, pictures and symbols. A detailed written policy on countering-bullying is in place and this includes reference to cyber-bullying. One young person who completed a survey with assistance, said that they have never been bullied.

Written policies and procedures are in place for managing incidents if young people are absent without authority. This is extremely rare and high staffing levels and environmental safety factors are in place for ensuring the young people's safety. Although there were recent incidents involving one young person running off, staff acted promptly and appropriately to ensure the young person's safe return. This is not representative of the young people who usually have respite at this home.

Behavioural management systems are in place for promoting the young people's safety and well-being. To ensure that interventions are appropriate and safe, staff are required to attend regular training on the methods of intervention adopted by the registered provider. These interventions are also monitored by management and the person carrying out Regulation 33 visits. The use of restraint is rare. Staff are very knowledgeable about the young people's needs and very proactive in responding to triggers resulting in inappropriate behaviours. However,

records show that high levels of physical intervention were used during recent months in response to behaviours exhibited by young people not familiar with the home. Management say that action taken at the time was to maximise the safety of everyone involved and when appropriate, external assistance was summoned. Generally, the young people benefit immensely from spending time with their peers and staff strive to ensure that all visits are positive experiences. In order to achieve this, sanctions are hardly used.

The provision of bathing and toilet facilities promotes the young people's privacy. These facilities also include an hydraulic bath and adapted toilet for young people with physical disabilities, situated on the ground floor. There are sufficient baths and toilets to avoid young people queuing or waiting. The safety of bathing facilities includes the testing of temperatures for hot water distributed from these facilities.

Positive steps are being taken to further develop health and safety systems in place. This includes the implementation of the quality assurance and monitoring system and the appointment of a staff member as 'health and safety champion'. These initiatives not only empower the staff but help to strengthen processes for ensuring that the environment and practices are safe at all times. Robust risk assessments are in place for a variety of reasons. These include activities undertaken by the young people, the environment and responding to a crisis. Fire safety is taken seriously and is one of the areas being developed by the health and safety champion. However, some findings show that the frequency of fire drills and the testing of fire call points have been sporadic during recent months. One fire door was also wedged open, although a magnetic door closure is on order to maximise safety in this area of the home. Procedures are in place for ensuring that safety checks are carried by approved contractors within the required timescales. These include adapted facilities, electrical and gas appliances and fire appliances. An up-to-date electrical wiring and installation test has been carried out. The report states that the outcome of the test was unsatisfactory. However, there is no further information in support of this outcome and any follow up work necessary.

There have been no staff appointed since the last inspection. In light of this, recruitment records were not inspected. There are procedures in place for ensuring that agency staff are suitably vetted prior to commencing work at the home. This enhances the safety of the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are excellent at providing individualised support for the young people. The quality of placement plans signifies the extent of planning and methods of intervention used. In practice, this ensures that the young people's views and wishes are taken into account. For example, communication systems including boards are widely used to help young people express their likes and dislikes. Link workers are instrumental in working closely with the young people and their families. This helps staff to plan the support which young people need during their stay. Where possible and appropriate, young people are also linked to staff who share the same cultural or ethnic backgrounds. In doing so, young people benefit from the bonds and relationships established.

At the time of this inspection, young people were on school holidays and engaged in a range of meaningful activities. The staffing levels were such that young people were able to take part in off-site activities while spending more peaceful times at home. A vast array of activities and

stimulus are provided at the home to support young people's learning and enjoyment. These include a purpose-built 'snoozelem', table-top games, an enclosed sand pit and computers.

Excellent links are forged between staff and schools. One educational professional describes the staff as being approachable and helpful. This professional also says that staff are prompt in dealing with queries and are always happy to attend school functions and meetings. There are consistent ways of working between the schools, staff and parents. One of these being the use of a communication book which staff say is effective in practice. The young people's files contain a range of documents relating to their education. These include individual education plans and assessments. Where appropriate, these plans assist staff in placement planning while providing continuity of care to the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young people's placement plans are comprehensive, with very clear procedural guidance for providing assistance and support. The 'all about me' document' is very personal to the individual young person. This document is used alongside of the overarching placement plan which includes safeguarding, physical and emotional needs, and risk assessments. Staff are vigilant about the young people's communication needs. As a result, pictorial evidence is retained on their files as a means of engaging young people in conversation about the highlights of their stay. One parent comments on their child who they say, experiences life in the wider community because staff enable this to happen.

Staff are proactive in their approach towards the young people's statutory and education reviews. One parent says that one member of staff always attends their child's care or education reviews. Reports prepared by staff for young people's reviews are clear about the young person's placement arrangements. Topics include health and social care. Where appropriate, pictorial or photographic evidence is presented at young people's reviews.

Although young people are usually accommodated for short stays at any one time, contact arrangements are agreed and recorded. Various forms and reasons for contact with parents and carers are recorded. Staff communicate with parents on behalf of the majority of the young people. However, where possible, young people do have access to telephones and are fully supported to contact their parents.

There are clear procedures in place for young people being introduced to the service and moving on. The majority of referrals are planned and agreed in advanced. This helps staff to establish initial relationships with the individual young person and their family or carers. It is also an opportunity for staff to understand and plan for the needs of young people which are often complex. One recent admission imposed on the service did not appear to be within the best interest of the young person, the staff or the existing group of young people. As a result, risk management decisions taken included some young people's respite breaks being cancelled. Although this was not ideal, it was a preventative measure to safeguard existing young people using the service. Despite the impact of this placement, staff are consistent in their approach when involved in all of the young people's departures from the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pathway planning is not pursued as part of the young people's care. Therefore, the criteria for this standard was not assessed.

Suitable adaptations are provided to meet the needs of young people who access this service. These include a bed which has recently been updated, bathing facilities and hoists, all of which are situated on the ground floor. In addition, there is also a passenger lift to the first floor. There are ramps situated in areas of the home to enable all young people to access the rear garden. Communal features of the home include a recreation room, a lounge, and dining/conservatory areas. This creates an environment where young people can move around without being confined to small and crowded spaces.

The upkeep of the premises is such that there are no obvious structural concerns. Routine visual checks are now being done by the health and safety champion. This enhances the overall safety and monitoring of the premises. The property is located in a residential area and within reasonable distance to local amenities and major transport links.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose is in place. This document clearly sets out the home's aims and objectives. The content is also in keeping with the criteria as set out under Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The children's guide is presented in an accessible format including pictures, photographs and symbols. This document is presented to young people as soon as possible to help them become familiar with the service. A parents' guide is in place and provides a wealth of information about key aspects of the service.

The young people are supported by a staff team who have a good mix of training and experience. At least 80% of the staff team have achieved the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. In addition, a percentage of staff have achieved Degrees in social work. The management team are suitably qualified and experienced. Staff also deputising in the absence of the Registered Manager have the relevant experience. The staff team ensures that the young people's needs are appropriately planned and communicated. This is achieved through handovers and shift planning meetings.

A staffing policy is in place and this is included in the Statement of Purpose. When necessary, staffing levels are increased. This provides a safe environment for the young people accessing the service at any one time. The young people know who is on duty every day because details of staff are displayed on a notice board. Staff management systems are planned to minimise disruption to the young people's care. One parent said that continuity of staff is good and there doesn't seem to be a high staff turnover.

All new staff are required to complete an induction which includes the children's workforce development council (CWDC) standards. On-going training and development opportunities are accessible to the staff team. These take into account secondment opportunities, placement arrangements for staff undertaking professional qualifications and in-house initiatives. There is substantial evidence to show the broad range of training courses staff attend. However, the actual training log is not up to date. As a result, this undermines the extent of training undertaken by staff to date.

Visits required under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 are carried out within the required timescales. Management say that these visits are usually unannounced and at varying times. The person carrying out these visits also spends time with staff and the children. This takes into account the criteria for these visits as specified under national minimum standard 32. Reports for these visits are submitted to Ofsted as required.

Outstanding progress has been made in developing systems to monitor the operations of the home. The newly devised quality assurance system is robust and made up of key components such as an action plan and self-assessment records. These are clearly linked to all of the Every Child Matters outcomes although the criteria has been modified for this service. Some of these processes are still evolving including the implementation of an annual development plan. The implementation of the quality assurance system is still in its early stages. However, it is already demonstrating trends and patterns in relation to practice and outcomes for the young people. Staff are being empowered to undertake various 'champion' roles in the home. These roles will enable staff to focus on specific topics linked to the overarching quality assurance system.

The young people's files are kept in very good order. These files contain all of the relevant information as specified under Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Although this is a respite service, staff are dedicated and committed to providing ongoing individualised care and support. One member of staff has also been appointed as champion for equality and diversity. The young people can rely on a service which accommodates all sorts of personal preferences and wishes, from hair products to leisure pursuits. Parents say that this is a 'home from home' environment. One parent praised the staff for taking on board what they describe as 'the little things' that mean so much to their child. The young people are guaranteed a fun time while learning about cultures, festivals and significant events in ways which are suitable to their understanding. In doing so, cultural meals are served, festivals are celebrated in the home and a multi-faith calendar is used as an aid memoir. The young people also look forward to party times.

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 meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
13	ensure that a written record is kept of the administration of any medicine to any child (Reg 21-(2)(c))	11 August 2010
26	ensure that adequate precautions are taken against the risk of fire by reviewing fire precautions, testing fire equipment at suitable intervals and increasing the frequency of fire drills (Reg 32 - (1)(a)(c)(v),(e))	31 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- seek further clarity regarding the outcome of the electrical and wiring installation test (NMS 26.4)
- ensure that written record of all training for all staff is maintained in the home. (NMS 31.4)