

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust

The Birches

Quality Report

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This report describes our judgement of the quality of care at this location. It is based on a combination of what we found when we inspected, information from our 'Intelligent Monitoring' system, and information given to us from people who use services, the public and other organisations.

Summary of findings

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Summary of findings

Overall summary

The Birches in Coventry provides respite care for up to seven children with learning disabilities and additional physical health needs.

Parents told us they felt their children were safe at The Birches. Staff understood how to keep children safe and how to report any issues of concern. We found that there were comprehensive risk assessment systems in place to keep children and the environment safe.

There were systems in place to ensure an effective service. Children and staff could give feedback and influence the running of the service via daily meetings. Surveys and audits measured the quality and effectiveness of the service. Staff undertook training to ensure they were competent and confident in their work with children.

Children who use services were involved in developing their care plans and risk assessments. Children were complimentary about staff and we saw children were treated with dignity and respect.

Staff felt supported by their teams and line managers and used systems for giving feedback on the service. Staff told us that they had direct contact with their managers but did not meet Trust executive team members.

Children we met were not detained under the Mental Health Act 1983; therefore we have not referred to the systems in place for monitoring the application of the Act in this report.

Summary of findings

The five questions we ask and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Are services safe?

The approach to bed occupancy was based on needs. This ensured that beds were not filled beyond the capacity of the unit, and that staff could manage the needs of all the children there at any particular time.

Parents told us they felt their children were safe at the Birches. There were systems for maintaining the health and safety of children, staff and the environment.

We saw good examples of how children's physical care was managed, supported by outside professionals when needed.

We found that procedures were in place to ensure that medicines could be given safely.

Are services effective?

The service helped children to be more independent, and it was consistent in its approach.

A good environment supported good practice. Staff supported parents.

Are services caring?

We saw that staff and children interacted warmly and positively together.

Staff showed a good awareness of children's needs and an ability to meet them sensitively.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

The service worked well to balance children's preferred dates to stay, with a suitable mix of children with compatible needs.

Staff understood parents' needs and concerns and supported them.

The environment was positive, with lots of murals, pictures and decorations to stimulate, interest and involve the children.

Are services well-led?

Staff told us they felt well supported by managers.

The manager told us they were allowed to make decisions about occupancy that were based on children's needs.

Staff told us the support from the estates management was good, with maintenance and repairs being dealt with promptly.

The service might do more to share good practice with the other similar small services run by the Trust.

Summary of findings

What we found about each of the main services at this location

Services for people with learning disabilities or autism

Decisions about bed occupancy were based on children's needs. This meant that sufficient numbers of staff could meet children's needs, without conflicting with the needs of others, in a safe environment.

Staff were trained and experienced and showed high levels of motivation and commitment. Many of the staff we spoke with had worked at The Birches for many years. All showed a very good knowledge of the needs of individual children and how to meet them.

We spoke by phone with a number of parents who all expressed satisfaction with the services they used.

We observed that staff and children interacted in a warm, friendly and supportive manner throughout.

Summary of findings

What people who use the location say

Parents of the children who use the service were very positive about it. One told us that the Birches was wonderful and was happy for her child to go there.

Good practice

We saw that a stable, well-motivated staff team understood the needs of the children and were able to meet them in a warm and positive manner.

The Birches

Detailed findings

Services we looked at:

Services for people with learning disabilities or autism

Our inspection team

Our inspection team was led by:

Chair: Professor Patrick Geoghegan, OBE

Team Leader: Jackie Howe, Care Quality Commission

The team was made up of a CQC inspector, and an Expert by Experience who had personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of service

Background to The Birches

The Trust has a total of 21 active locations. There are three hospital sites: Brooklands, St Michael's Hospital and Caludon Centre. There are four locations providing respite services for children with learning disabilities. The Birches is one of these.

The Trust provides a wide range of mental health and learning disability services for children, young adults, adults and older adults as well as providing a range of community services for people in Coventry.

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust has been inspected 21 times since registration. Out of these, there have been 10 inspections covering five locations which are registered for mental health conditions.

The Birches has not previously been inspected.

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust provides overnight short breaks to children with a learning disability and additional health needs (complex physical health needs and/or mental health/behavioural needs). It provides this service in four separate locations. These services all provide planned respite care for children and young people away from their parents or other main carers.

The Birches in Coventry provides care for up to seven children with learning disabilities and additional physical health needs.

Why we carried out this inspection

We inspected Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust during our Wave 1 pilot inspection. The Trust was selected as one of a range of Trusts to be inspected under CQC's revised inspection approach to mental health and community services.

How we carried out this inspection

To get to the heart of people who use services' experiences of care, we always ask the following five questions of every service and provider:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it caring?

Detailed findings

- Is it responsive to people's needs?
- Is it well-led?

The inspection team inspected the following core service at this location:

- Services for people with learning disabilities and autism

Before visiting, we reviewed a range of information we hold about the location and asked other organisations to share

what they knew about the location. We carried out an announced visit on 21 January 2014. We spoke with the manager and with staff on duty. We observed how children were being cared for and reviewed care, or treatment records, of children who used the services. We spoke with parents who used the services who shared their views and experiences of the location.

Services for people with learning disabilities or autism

Information about the service

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust provides overnight short breaks to children with a learning disability and additional health needs (complex physical health needs and/or mental health/behavioural needs). It provides this service in four separate locations. These services all provide planned respite care for children and young people away from their parents or other main carers.

The Birches in Coventry provides care for up to seven children with learning disabilities and additional physical health needs.

This service has not been inspected by the CQC.

Summary of findings

Decisions about bed occupancy were based on children's needs. This meant that sufficient numbers of staff could meet children's needs, without conflicting with the needs of others, in a safe environment.

Staff were trained and experienced and showed high levels of motivation and commitment. Many of the staff we spoke with had worked at The Birches for many years. All showed a very good knowledge of the needs of individual children and how to meet them.

We spoke by phone with a number of parents who all expressed satisfaction with the services they used.

We observed that staff and children interacted in a warm, friendly and supportive manner throughout.

Services for people with learning disabilities or autism

Are services for people with learning disabilities or autism safe?

Safeguarding

Staff showed a good awareness of their responsibilities in safeguarding children. We saw that staff noted and recorded all bruises and checked out the reasons they occurred so they were satisfied there were no concerning reasons for them.

Risk management

At The Birches we saw good examples of how children's physical care was managed, with the support of outside professionals as needed. For example, the speech and language team were closely involved where swallowing was a concern for children. The manager gave us examples of risk assessments they regularly carried out.

Safe staffing

The needs-led approach to bed occupancy ensured beds were not filled beyond the capacity of the unit, thus managing the needs of the children there. Staff showed a good awareness of where a child's needs might conflict with those of another, or where two children's needs were so demanding they could not be accommodated at the same time as other children or each other.

Staff were well supported and properly inducted and trained. At The Birches two new staff told us they were supernumerary to the staff team and would remain so until they were assessed as able to work unsupervised.

Safe medication

We found that procedures were in place to ensure that medication could be administered safely. The manager told us they checked medication coming in and going out of the service, although they told us Trust policy did not currently require them to check medication 'going out' back to parents. The nurse responsible for the medication at The Birches told us medication was counted in and out, checked daily and there had never been a difference that could not be accounted for. We saw that medicines were kept safely and securely.

Are services for people with learning disabilities or autism effective? (for example, treatment is effective)

Helping children become more independent

Staff at The Birches were able to give details of two children they had supported to become continent. We saw that staff were able to foster new skills with children and then help this to be shared with other agencies and carers. The manager at The Birches summed up the caring but determined approach we saw on the unit and explained that children were able to be independent and that they worked on this. It was explained that this was not easy, there needed to be assessment and review otherwise it could be believed the child could not do something.

Consistency

We talked with different staff and got consistent responses about how they supported particular children with complex needs. We saw children were well supported on their return from school.

Staff told us they liaised with schools to ensure balanced diets and to ensure that a consistent response was given to meet individual needs.

Effective environment

The Birches was purpose-built with facilities specifically designed to meet the needs of the children using them.

Supporting Workers

We saw there was low staff turnover, high quality of staff interaction and understanding of individual needs. We saw staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to effectively meet children's needs and work confidently with other agencies and carers to ensure needs were met. Staff recognised what a difficult job parents often had and worked with them and other agencies, to ensure the maximum benefit for all.

Are services for people with learning disabilities or autism caring?

Getting the right support

Staff spoken with demonstrated in, discussion, they were committed to the well-being of the children they supported. In some cases staff had worked at the Birches for many years and had seen children grow up and leave

Services for people with learning disabilities or autism

the service. We saw and heard of examples of good, child-centred practice and saw staff showed a good awareness of children's needs and likes. We observed warm, friendly and positive interactions between staff and children. We saw at one point that one child, with very little verbal communication, appeared quiet and withdrawn. A member of staff mentioned a name they knew meant something positive to them and were promptly rewarded with a big beaming smile.

Developing trusting relationships

Where children had limited verbal communication, staff showed a very good awareness of non-verbal cues, what children liked and disliked and how they preferred to be approached.

We saw very positive responses from the four parents regarding The Birches. Parents who used the service were very positive about it. One told us that the Birches was wonderful and was happy for her child to go there.

Are services for people with learning disabilities or autism responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Meeting individual needs

We saw the service worked well to balance preferred dates of stays with a suitable mix of children who were compatible with their needs. Staff told us that those who used the service had their needs assessed and agreed by a local selection panel but once that process was approved The Birches was able to agree with parents what dates would be available. Staff told us there was some scope for emergency stays for children using the service.

The Birches presented a positive environment that had lots of murals, pictures and decorations to stimulate, interest and involve the children. There were lots of photographs displayed of activities and outings enjoyed by the children.

Supporting other carers

Staff at The Birches were seen to be supportive and understood parents' needs and individual concerns. Staff gave details of home visits and other ways of involving, consulting and supporting parents.

Are services for people with learning disabilities or autism well-led?

Leadership

Many staff, including the manager, had worked at The Birches for a number of years. This meant that the team was stable, and this ensured consistency in practices. Staff told us they felt well supported by managers. The manager told us they were allowed to make needs led decisions about occupancy. Staff told us the support from the estates management was good, with maintenance and repairs being dealt with promptly.

Managers told us they were generally given autonomy to use resources to meet assessed needs. This was particularly the case with bed occupancy, where there were sound clinical reasons for only some beds being occupied at some times.

Staff engagement

Staff at the Birches told us they received 'core briefings' and said they were involved in 'big conversations' led by the Trust in relation to national and local issues which had relevance to the service. Observations and discussion showed staff had traditionally done excellent work at The Birches and were supported by the Trust to continue in this work, with clinical guidance as required from appropriate health professionals.

Governance

The Birches provides a service within Coventry. The manager told us they had regular contacts and meetings with the other three services in Coventry, North Warwickshire and Solihull that provide a similar local service across the Trust. Because the services were in geographically separate areas, and in some cases had been run by different organisations until relatively recently, we suggested they might all benefit from sharing good practice, possibly through the medium of managers doing 'peer reviews' of each other's services.