

2495375

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned home for nine children or young people with emotional and/or behavioural needs.

Inspection date: 21 March 2019

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was triggered by an anonymous complaint that expressed concerns about the management of the home and children in placement, and about the effectiveness of managers' behaviour management and risk management strategies. The complainant alleged that:

- a 12-year-old girl was subjected to bullying and that the home is unable to meet this child's needs
- two members of staff were assaulted by a young person in January 2019, and, although there were no consequences for the young person's actions, two staff members were dismissed as a result of this incident
- children are free to enter each other's bedrooms, which the complainant feels is inappropriate
- children smoke drugs in the home and staff do not challenge them about this
- managers are aware that a young person is keeping a stolen bicycle on the premises and no action has been taken to address this
- staff training opportunities are inadequate.

This monitoring visit took place on 21 March 2019. The home was registered with Ofsted in November 2018 and is yet to have its first full inspection. The focus of this visit was to explore the concerns about the service raised in the anonymous complaint. On the day of the monitoring visit, the registered manager was on annual leave. The home's deputy manager, the regional manager and some of the young people were interviewed.

The complaint highlighted that a 12-year-old girl was placed at the home on an emergency basis for 72 hours. The complaint said that, despite this agreement, the child's placement has continued and that this is inappropriate. The deputy manager confirmed that a child was placed as a short-term emergency placement. However, the local authority has had difficulties identifying an alternative placement for her. Managers said that the current placement meets the child's immediate needs, and that it remains in the child's best interests to stay in the home, until an appropriate long-term placement is identified and secured.

A review of the referral information confirmed that the home received detailed information before the placement started and that the home was able to meet the child's identified needs.

The child met with the inspector and said of the home, 'It's been good. It's nice. Quiet. Staff are friendly. I know how to make a complaint, but there's been nothing to complain about. There's a complaints box and residents' meeting where you can complain. Actually, I like it here.'

The complaint alleged that this child was bullied by an older child and that managers did not address this. Managers acknowledged that, when the 12-year-old arrived at the home, there were occasions when she was bullied by another, older child. The younger child brought this to staff's attention, who in turn immediately addressed this with the other child.

File records evidenced individual discussions between staff and both girls. Staff conducted a key-work session focused on bullying with the older child. The manager met with the younger child to reassure her that the bullying would stop. She was also offered the opportunity to participate in a three-way meeting, where issues would be discussed openly with both girls. The younger child declined this offer. She told the inspector that by this time the bullying had stopped and that she did not see the need for any further action. She told the inspector, 'That was last week; it's stopped now. I told staff, but they already knew. They stepped things up some, she apologised and there's been nothing since.' Staff's management of bullying incidents was appropriate and effective.

The complaint alleged that two members of staff involved in a physical altercation with a child were dismissed as a result. The deputy manager said that this is inaccurate. One of the staff members was an agency staff member. Managers had not been entirely satisfied with her performance prior to the incident. Managers felt that this worker's handling of the situation had been poor. Her involvement in this incident, coupled with previous concerns for her work practices, prompted managers to no longer offer her shifts at the home. This decision was taken to ensure that children received good support and care, even when their behaviour was challenging.

A second staff member who was also assaulted by the same child is currently off sick. This member of staff is a permanent worker. Managers are awaiting her return to work to complete her debrief about the incident. Managers confirmed that this worker has not been dismissed.

The complainant had concerns about the effectiveness of managers' behaviour

management strategies. Several behaviour management plans were reviewed during this visit. They were appropriately detailed, with clear guidance to staff about managing children's behaviour effectively. However, some plans had not been updated following key incidents when children's behaviour had been challenging. This was also the case for some risk assessments and safety plans. Managers said they believed all children's behavioural management plans had in fact been updated, but could not be located. Managers must ensure that staff have access to the most up-to-date plans and assessments. This is to ensure that staff have appropriate guidance in managing children's behaviour, particularly when children's behaviour poses serious risks to others.

The complaint alleged that children are free to enter each other's bedrooms and that staff encouraged this. The complainant felt that this was inappropriate. The deputy manager said this was inaccurate. Generally, children are not allowed to have other children in their bedrooms without staff first completing a risk assessment. However, the exception to this recently has been visits to the home by a relative of a young person. This young person had lived at the home for some time and their cousin was well known to staff. There had been no incidents and staff were supporting the young person to develop positive family relationships. It is under these circumstances that the cousin was permitted to join the young person in her bedroom during the visit.

The complaint alleged that children smoke illegal substances openly in the home and in their bedrooms. Managers said that this is not the case. Children are not permitted to smoke at all in the building. However, there have been instances when children have been suspected of smoking discreetly in their bedrooms. In such cases, staff entered bedrooms and conducted a room search. Children are reminded of the home's no drug and alcohol policy. Children receive the home's children's guide upon admission, which highlights the home's approach to alcohol and substance misuse on the premises. File records evidenced staff discussions with children who are caught or thought to be smoking or misusing illegal substances in the home.

The complaint alleged that a male resident is keeping a stolen bicycle on the home's premises and that staff are supporting the harbouring of stolen property. The deputy manager said she was aware that this child had a bicycle belonging to him stolen. Since this time, the organisation has received a donation of several bicycles from an external company. These bicycles are stored on the home's premises and all children are encouraged to cycle.

The final part of the complaint alleged that staff training opportunities are inadequate in meeting staff's needs. A review of the home's staff training programme indicated that staff training opportunities are good. All new staff complete an induction. This includes numerous e-learning training, such as on safeguarding, conflict resolution and mental health awareness. However, managers must ensure that the staff files evidence staff's completion of the home's induction pack as some of these were blank. Following induction, staff complete training that is wide-ranging and relevant to their roles. This includes training in first aid, medication, de-escalation techniques, drug and alcohol awareness and self-harm.

Future scheduled staff training includes an extensive training programme focused on social pedagogy.

Managers are advised to ensure that all staff members receive training in child protection. While all care staff have received this training, the home's cook has not. This is important to ensure that all employees understand the home's child protection policies and procedures, particularly whistleblowing procedures, which help to keep children safe.

This monitoring visit concluded that the majority of the complaints appear unjustified or have been appropriately resolved. Identified shortfalls do not relate to concerns raised by the complainant.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Children's case records 36.(1) The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— (b) are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(b)). This relates to children's behaviour management plans, risk assessments and safety plans.	01/07/2019
12.(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(vii). This relates to ensuring that the home's cook receives appropriate child protection training.	01/07/2019
Employment of staff 33.(1) The registered person must— (a) ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33(1)(a))	01/07/2019

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken in relation to issues raised in a complaint received by Ofsted.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2495375

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street,
Wandsworth, London, SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Philip Townsend

Registered manager: Lucellta Wallace-Esnard

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, social care inspector

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