Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC003897
Inspection date	11/03/2014
Inspector	Heather Chaplin
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/01/2014

Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is operated by an independent organisation. Children and young people using this service may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The service is registered to provide residential care and accommodation for one child or young person.

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 **satisfactory progress**.

The home was rated adequate in all areas at its last full inspection, held on 27 January 2014. This represented steady improvement from the previous full inspection last year, when it was rated inadequate.

The present inspection shows that the home has continued to improve. Of the four requirements made in January, three have been addressed in full. The fourth requirement has been partially addressed and is therefore repeated. Four new recommendations have been made to support further improvement.

The home was asked to ensure that full recruitment checks are completed and recorded in detail on staff personnel files. Specifically, in January 2014, there were references missing and unexplained gaps in employment history.

There is now an improved system in place for auditing file contents, with a staff profile sheet on each file. There is also a new interview question relating to gaps in employment history, which will help to avoid similar issues arising in future. The home has addressed the shortfalls relating to staff file sampled on the last inspection, but has not completed an audit of the other staff files to date. An examination of the remaining staff files showed that there is another staff member with a substantial gap in their employment history. In another example, the employment dates are recorded in whole years and not months, which leaves a great deal of time unaccounted for.

This means that although the system and some staff files have significantly improved, there are still historical files where detail has been overlooked. The requirement has been repeated and the home has been asked to ensure that the historical records are brought up to the required standard. Although there are no concerns about the staff themselves and all have Disclosure and Barring Service checks, incomplete staff records increase the risk of the home employing unsuitable persons.

At the last inspection, the home was asked to ensure that outdated strategies were removed from the young person's latest care plan. This is because the young people's care planning documents contain, in date order, all the strategies that have ever been in place since their arrival at the home. Experienced staff who understand the system can identify which strategies are current, so the requirement is met. However, the care plan is still over-complicated with behaviours, risks and strategies that are no longer applicable. It is confusing and potentially stigmatising to have young people's past issues listed on the same document as current needs. A recommendation has been made.

The home was asked to ensure that young people’s pocket money was not sanctioned in its entirety and to use more creative solutions to resolve financial reparations. This has been addressed. The young person has now resolved their remaining debt through non-financial means.

The home was also asked to ensure that parents and family members are consulted as a part of the Regulation 33 monitoring visits to the home. This has recently been implemented. Parents are now consulted effectively as part of the Regulation 33 process, in addition to the manager's regular weekly contact with the young person's family.

Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 reports have been sent to Ofsted as required. Regulation 33 reports often refer to records dating back to two or three months prior to the date of the visit; for example, the report dated 3 September 2013 reviewed records from July 2013. The reason for this is that there has been some slippage in completion of the reports, so they are often one or two months behind. This means that the manager, provider and the regulator do not always have up–to-date information to help to monitor the home. A recommendation has been made.

Regulation 33 reports mention that the young person cannot attend what the home terms 'house meetings', because they are at school. The young person is effectively consulted through other means, but in discussion, it transpired that these meetings are for staff only. The purpose and name of the meetings therefore lack clarity and transparency. A recommendation has been made.

The home's Registered Manager has been away on annual leave for a month, but the home has been well managed in his absence. Another Registered Manager has overseen the service, with the deputy manager's support. There is good evidence of management monitoring of records.

The home's development plan is not yet complete. It contains a great deal of duplicated placement planning information about the young person, but insufficient information about the home's future developments. This means that it is not yet a fully operational working document which specifies and tracks the home's future planning. A recommendation has been made.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
26 (2001)	ensure that all staff employed have full and satisfactory information available in relation to all matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	31/05/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. In particular, ensure that the plan is complete and that content is appropriate to its purpose (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. In particular, consider reviewing the structure of the child's placement plan so that it only contains current information (NMS 22.5)
- ensure that children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of the home and important decisions or changes in the child's life, unless this is contrary to their interests; in particular, ensure that there is clarity about the purpose and name of 'house' meetings; specifically, whether they are

for staff or young people (NMS 1.1)

- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; in particular, ensure that Regulation 33 visits review current records, not those relating to the past. (NMS 21.1)

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*.