Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008271
Inspection date	12/02/2013
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/02/2012

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care for up to two young people who have experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company owns and operates the setting.

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 judged as good at the last inspection carried out in November 2012 and continues to maintain good quality care and the outcomes for young people continue to be good overall. For example, staff are working very effectively to provide stability, good daily routines, good access to physical and emotional health care, and a sound base for increasing family contacts. As a result, young people are healthy, are well settled in education and their long term plans to reunite with their families are an achievable and realistic prospect. Similarly, young people are gaining confidence and their risk taking behaviour is reduced because staff spend quality time with them and provide positive role modelling, good advice and individualised support. Staff also continue to provide appropriate support to young people who have moved on to other planned placements. They assist young people to network with appropriate peers through links with the organisation's other small homes in the locality. Staff also liaise and lobby persistently with placing authorities and relevant professionals to minimise delay in getting appropriate professional help for young people in accordance with their care plan. As a result, young people who have recently moved on say to staff, 'Thank you for your help and support.'

The home has not fully met all the recommendations raised at the last inspection and progress in some areas has not yet taken effect. Nevertheless, the home remains safe for young people, and good quality work is being done by staff. The recommendation regarding the home having evidence of all the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on staff is not yet completed. A form for logging the information has been devised, but has not been filled out for the existing staff team at the home. The manager is enlisting the support of the organisation administrative staff to complete this task to ensure that the home's staff records contain this information. Similarly, the recommendation regarding the inclusion of young people's views in staff appraisal has been debated amongst the organisation's managers and a format to record young people's views has been designed. However, there have not been any staff appraisals in the period since the inspection and this format has not yet been used here.

A third recommendation pertained to the proportionate use of risk assessment. Staff and the manager have adopted a system of risk assessment review and adjustment of risk levels. They believe that this helps ensure that risk assessments better reflect young people's actual present risks and ensures that an unnecessarily institutional approach is minimised. In practice for example, they have downgraded some young people's risks to 'low' because there have been no occurrences since placement. However, they have not adopted the same review process for the home's generic risk assessment despite altering their practice in the home in the light of young people's actual risks. For example, the storage area for knives and substances potentially hazardous to health is presently unlocked, based on the staff and manager's own assessment of the lowness of the actual risk to young people presently in placement. The home's risk assessment document does not reflect this present practice because staff and the manager have not remembered to adjust the home's risk assessment in line with present risks. This shortfall does not adversely affect young people, but is a management oversight that they have not identified from monitoring.

Young people remain safe in the home because staff and managers act effectively concerning young people's risks of going missing and of sexual exploitation. They work together well with police and safeguarding agencies to minimise the episodes of going missing and the risks when young people do go missing. They are realistic and appropriate in arrangements they make with young people so that there is no doubt about how valued young people feel as individuals. The recommendation made at the last inspection to record the information given by young people about why they went missing and the action that needs to be taken in the light of that has been met fully. Staff and managers work together to seek any messages and trends arising from what young people say about where they have been and this is used to help prevent further episodes.

The leadership and management of the home remains strong. The manager has recently implemented an improved training tracker to ensure that all staff receive timely refresher training. She has ensured that a member of staff continues her diploma training by overcoming an issue regarding assessors. She is also considering the specific staff training needs arising from the individual needs of young people placed. For example, the manager is seeking out information and training about anger management issues and being one of twins. The manager has also just introduced a savings account for young people which the home will contribute to and which will not be available to young people until they are eighteen. She hopes this will give young people a very positive message about the organisation's commitment to them and help instil the concept of saving for the future.

The manager is utilising a new format for the review and monitoring of the home, as is the home's Regulation 33 visitor. These formats prompt for the evaluation of the quality of the home and for consideration of patterns and trends to identify targets for the development plan of the home. The new formats also prompt for consultation with young people, stakeholders and parents as well as the review of complaints. However, these aspects are not working to full effect. For example, the monitoring by both the visitor and the manager has not robustly scrutinised complaints records to check that minimum standards have been complied with. As a result, the records of recent allegations against staff do not contain a clear and comprehensive summary of the matter and the summary has not been placed on the staff member's confidential file or a copy given to them. Whilst this does not directly or adversely affect the safety of any young person placed, it compromises the safeguarding process long term. This is because the information is not traceable to the member of staff long term, for example, when references are sought or if further allegations are subsequently made.

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 risk assessments of the whole home environment are regularly reviewed, in particular, that they take account of present practices deemed proportionate to young people's current needs (NMS 10.8)
- ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations against a particular member of staff is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded. Ensure also that the information is retained on the confidential file, even after someone leaves the organisation, until the person reaches normal retirement age, or for ten years if this is longer (NMS 20.7)
- ensure that the procedures for monitoring the home are effective with relation to allegations and complaints about the provision and also consultation. (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*.