

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	22/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC013743
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Action for Children
Registered provider address	3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	Shelagh Frankcom
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Emeline Evans/Kenneth Smith

Inspection date	22/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. Since the last full inspection, there have been changes in the management team for the children's home. A new manager has recently been appointed who is suitably experienced and she has applied to be registered with Ofsted. There has also been a change to the post of service manager. The operations manager has remained in post and this has given some consistency for the staff and young people. The manager is beginning to understand the strengths of the home and is aware of areas for development. She, along with the rest of the management team, has concentrated on meeting the requirements made at the last inspection. They are also in the process of identifying areas for improving practice in all of the houses across the site. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to the young people in their care. They have formed good relationships with young people and speak positively about them. The most critical factor across the three operative homes on the site is the high number of vacant staffing positions. There is currently a vacancy rate of 29% and this is having an impact on the quality of care provided to the young people. There has been a high number of staff leaving in recent months and exit interviews have not been undertaken to enable the management team to look at trends and then incorporate these into a staff retention strategy. The management team is in the process of implementing a recruitment drive; however, this has yet to be completed and, to date, there remains a shortage of staff. Staff priority has been to keep the young people safe and to manage each shift on a day-to-day basis. Staff morale is mixed across the site. Progress has been seen for some individual young people in relation to independence and social interaction; however, this has been reported as limited due to the low staffing levels and the inconsistency of staff. There has been a reliance on using agency staff to cover shifts. Since December, there has been a total of 43 different agency staff used. Some shifts are understaffed. When new agency workers start work at the home, the induction package is not comprehensive and does not give the agency member of staff information in relation to safeguarding procedures or equip them with information to support the young people. In addition, agency staff do not always have time to read young people's care plans and ensure that they are aware of policies and procedures before they start work on shift. Managers have recently started to use a different	

agency. They have looked at the qualifications of the agency staff and have approached this agency to ensure that all the staff have completed, or are enrolled on, the appropriate qualification and that appropriate training has been undertaken.

Care planning and risk assessment documents have been reviewed. Care planning documentation is much more detailed and child focused. It gives staff clear guidance on how to support young people effectively and contains useful information on young people's individual vulnerabilities. Information contained in original referral paperwork from placing authorities is now incorporated into this information. This enables staff to better understand young people's individual needs. However, individualised communication systems for young people are not being consistently implemented. Staff have not all had the training to be able to use specific methods of communication. This does not provide young people with the necessary tools to be able to communicate and express their choices.

Due to staff leaving the organisation, the managers took the decision to move some staff from one house to another on the same site. Young people were not prepared for this disruption in these attachments, or informed in an individualised manner of these moves. This practice does not enable a reflection of the impact that these decisions have on young people.

Since the last inspection, allegations or suspicions of harm have been promptly and appropriately shared with external safeguarding agencies. When internal investigations have been carried out by managers, recommendations have been acted on. Information is now centrally stored to enable clear oversight by managers of outstanding tasks. Significant events and updates are now being regularly communicated to Ofsted. This now demonstrates effective partnership working.

Young people's needs and the impact on their well-being is considered when admitting new young people to the home. There have been no new referrals since the last inspection. An impact risk assessment has now been devised but not yet used; this enables all risks to be explored and provides evidence for decision making on the suitability of the placements prior to admitting young people. When young people transition in or out of the service, staff work in close partnership with parents, carers and professionals to assess young people's needs to ensure a successful transition.

Staff have undergone a range of training since the last inspection. Staff state they now feel well equipped to support the young people. Training has included epilepsy awareness, safeguarding and first aid. In addition, staff have undertaken training in recording; this has been focused to ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, clear and objective recording. There has been an improvement seen in this area. Records of restraints are now completed in a timely manner and contain sufficient detail to ensure that staff can analyse challenging behaviour effectively. De-briefs with young people are now fully recorded.

Observed interactions suggest young people's relationships with staff are good and

that they feel safe. Staff have clear and consistent boundaries and understand the needs of the individual young people and young people know what is expected of them. As a result, young people receive structured care.

Young people who have been excluded from their school placements have been provided with a small number of hours of education a week. However, there is no long-term plan on how this will be extended to full-time hours. There are limited formalised activities in the school day to help to develop and achieve skills for those young people without education placements. It is not evident if each young person's potential for learning is fully recognised.

The service is monitored and subject to regular internal auditing by the manager and external scrutiny by other professionals. The manager is reviewing processes and, through this monitoring, there is more awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the service.

The secure premises provide an environment where young people feel safe and where they are being safely cared for. Information has been cascaded to staff in relation to the sliding fire doors to ensure that these are not propped open for easy access. The signs have been revised and these doors were seen to be shut during the inspection. Bathroom doors and other areas are locked at times; the reason for this is not evident, or if this is necessary to safeguard the young people. This practice seems institutional and prevents young people accessing all areas of their home.

The manager is enthusiastic and keen to improve the service. She understands the areas of improvement needed and recognises that the staff team needs support and guidance to care for young people in a consistent, safe way. The managers and staff spoken with have a clear vision and realistic aspirations for the service and are passionate in achieving positive outcomes for the young people.

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a charitable organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 19 children: 15 children who have learning disabilities and up to four places for children who have a physical disability.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/09/2016	Full	Requires improvement
08/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/11/2015	Full	Good
22/12/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

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 (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
8: The education standard: In order to meet the education standard, the registered person is required to: (a)(iv)(v) ensure that staff help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment and provide opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8(a)(iv)(v))	31/03/2017
13: The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person is required to: (2)(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13(2)(d)(e))	31/03/2017
Ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. In particular, agency staff that are working in the home. (Regulation 33(1)(a))	31/03/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that individualised communication systems are implemented in practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.24)
- Ensure that children are able to access all shared areas of the home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph

3.10)

- Monitor and review the patterns and trends of turnover of staff, by ensuring that exit interviews are completed and negative trends addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)
- Ensure that staff have the skills and confidence to communicate and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to children they care for. In particular, when staff move to other houses or leave the organisation, staff communicate this in an individualised manner to each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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