

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	25/02/2014
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/07/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home that is registered to accommodate three young people who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

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 **inadequate progress**.

At the last inspection in July 2013 the home was judged as being good. Two recommendations were made and one of these has been addressed, while one has not been fully acted upon. The process of behaviour management has been amended to ensure that no plan includes the use of locking of doors to prevent movement around the home. No further incidents have occurred where any restrictive practice has been implemented. In general young people have their views recorded and this evidences their participation in care planning procedures. However the section of the homes Looked After Child review report for a recently admitted young person was left blank. Although the Registered Manager noted the young person had been present at the review and had hand written his opinions and wishes, these had been kept by the reviewing officer and not translated into the document held on file. This has resulted in a missed opportunity to capture such views and accurately evidence the progress and development of young people during their time at the home.

Since the last inspection the setting has experienced a number of issues that impact negatively on the home. This includes the admission of new young people which has

created some difficult dynamics including young people being jointly involved in risk taking behaviours, notably substance misuse and running away. This period has also seen a fairly high turnover of staff. This includes some staff being moved to other homes within the organisation and a senior member of staff resigning in difficult circumstances. New staff have recently been appointed which will help to reduce the number of shifts using bank or agency staffing.

An investigation visit was carried out in November of last year following a most serious situation involving a young person who had been placed at the home for a short period of time before going missing. The outcome found that the home had followed all relevant admission, risk assessment, care planning and missing from care procedures including notifying the police in good time. However shortfalls identified at this inspection indicate that not all lessons learned from that situation have been consistently applied in practice. On occasion staff have acted appropriately in keeping young people safe such as contacting and working with British Transport Police in removing young people from trains they were using to run away on. However on other occasions the same young people, who have histories of running away from care and being at risk of sexual exploitation, are not always reported swiftly to the police as required by protocols and the homes own risk assessments and care plans. For example despite a young person having recently returned from a period of several days of being missing with another young person from the home and subsequently running away within a day of their return, staff waited two hours before contacting the police. Both young people in question were missing a further day before being located some 40 miles away. While away from the home these young people have been arrested and charged with drug related offences and are thought to have stayed with adults who are inappropriate. Such shortfalls do not safeguard young people from the risk of harm.

Young people admitted to the home are not always appropriately matched to the existing needs of young people currently in placement. Risk assessments and care plans generally take account of the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of young people and how these should be met by staff. However some assessments do not fully acknowledge the risks young people may be to others at the point of admission and are not updated when new incidents occur. For instance young people who have previous issues of poor/inappropriate relationships with peers of the opposite sex have been admitted alongside young people with histories of vulnerabilities toward being sexually exploited. Similarly when incidents have occurred when young people have stated their intention to harm themselves, although managed well at the time, risk assessments and behaviour management plans have not been subsequently updated. These shortfalls pose a risk that young people are not being suitably matched with the existing young person group before they move in, while care planning, risk and intervention strategies do not always provide staff with clear and accurate guidance as to how to manage and reduce risk.

Intervention strategies aimed at managing and reducing the risks young people pose to themselves and others are not consistent, and most recently, are ineffective. Young people who arrived with problematic substance misuse issues have made little progress in reducing them; although by their own admission they have no intention

to stop. The same young people have encouraged other young people in the home to partake in drug misuse including smoking illegal substances within the home itself. A young person said, 'staff sometimes stop us...although we smoked on the doorstep yesterday'; records show that police have been called to search the home and speak to the young people concerned, while staff have carried out regular searches of bedrooms when concerns arise. Strategies to counter such behaviour have included not giving young people 'money in hand', however this has not been consistently applied with the same young people being given their daily incentive monies when it was clear they were still purchasing illegal substances or legal highs. Despite young people being offered support and guidance around the negative impact of such misuse the current approach results in them receiving mixed messages as to the seriousness of drug misuse.

Young people are not always provided with care and boundaries which supports their personal needs or emotional well-being. During the inspection a young person disclosed that they had not been provided with a new hairbrush after they had lost the one they had several days earlier when they had run off. This was quickly resolved, but would not have been without the inspectors intervention. A young person also showed the inspector a photograph on their camera of the white board in the office on which another young person had been able to write extremely abusive messages concerning two young people. These shortfalls indicate a failure to meet basic personal needs, protect potentially confidential information, or enforce appropriate boundaries. As a result young people were able to view abusive messages about them which impacted negatively on an already difficult group dynamic.

Placing social workers praised the level of communication maintained, notably with the Registered Manager, and in general the efforts of staff. They noted that young people had made good progress until recently, confirming that, 'this has been the longest and most stable placement they had had'. However they said that since the admission of new young people such progress had considerably reduced, resulting in poor levels of attendance to the on-site education programme, concerns regarding drug misuse and running away from the home and subsequently placing themselves at high risk.

Some young people continue to make good progress at the home, attend college and are developing improved levels of self-esteem and confidence. Other young people are making less progress, have refused to attend education both on-site and externally, and have not been able to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with staff. Young people display ambivalent views of living at the home. Some say that they, 'feel safe' and note they are doing, 'really well', while others stated vociferously that they do not get on well with many staff and commented that, 'rules' are not always applied consistently.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare, care, education, and supervision of children accommodated there; in particular ensure that agreed strategies to keep young people safe are followed in practice, such as reporting young people missing within good time (Regulation 11 (1)(b))	26/03/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there; in particular that any potential impact and risk posed by the admission of new young people, to those young people currently placed, are fully considered before the new placement is accepted (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	26/03/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare, care, education, and supervision of children accommodated there; in particular ensure that assessments and intervention strategies accurately reflect the risks young people may be to themselves or others and are effectively applied (Regulation 11 (1)(b))	26/03/2014
14 (2001)	ensure that the needs and reasonable preferences of each child accommodated in the home for clothing including footwear, and personal necessities are met; in particular that young people are provided with hair brushes (Regulation 14 (1))	26/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure all young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support; in particular that the occasions where young people do not wish to comment is confirmed in writing, such as within review reports (NMS 1.3)
- establish a culture which supports positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement (NMS 3.2)
- keep information about individual children confidentially; in particular ensure that access to the staff office is closely monitored so that young people do not write abusive messages on the daily planner notice board. (NMS 22.3)

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*.