

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC022447
Inspection date	13/03/2014
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	11/07/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2014

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a voluntary organisation. It provides accommodation for a maximum of seven young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home provides two 'open' units as part of a 'step down' from a secure unit. Marion House provides short term assessments for young people and Gerard House provides longer term care.

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 full inspection in July 2013, the overall effectiveness of the home was judged to be good. The home has made inadequate progress since then because it has not maintained good outcomes for young people. Three requirements are made. They relate to hazards to young people's safety and staff competence in meeting young people's needs. Four recommendations for good practice are made. The one requirement and three recommendations made at the last inspection have been mostly addressed and this has led to improved practice in some areas.

Since the last inspection, regular fire drills have been re-instated. Some young people have refused to engage in these and have not practised what to do in the event of a fire. The home has made sure that young people have all been given clear instructions about the fire procedures. Staff continue to encourage young people to take part in fire drills so that they become familiar with the procedure to be followed

in the event of a fire.

A recommendation was made to ensure young people exercise choice in the food they eat and prepare their own snacks. This has been met. The home promotes young people's good health and provides a healthy diet, taking into account young people's stated preferences. A vegetarian diet is well catered for. Staff encourage healthy eating. Young people preparing for independence choose and prepare their own food. Some do this successfully. Other young people have a relatively poor diet. This is despite increasing the variety of foods in their diet since their admission to the home. This undermines their current and long term health.

The Statement of Purpose identifies that the home specialises in supporting young people to stay safe. The home works with young people who display behaviour such as self-harming, alcohol and substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity, volatile and challenging behaviour and going missing. In line with a recommendation made at the last inspection, there has been some evaluation of the learning and development programme for staff. All staff complete mandatory training, however, few have had specialist training to manage the specific behaviours of young people or those identified in the Statement of Purpose. This means some staff have not yet had the opportunity to develop the specialist knowledge and skills they need. The home cannot adequately demonstrate that staff are sufficiently competent to meet the children's needs as outlined in its Statement of Purpose. Plans are in place to further develop staff members' good parenting skills.

The home has increased in size since the last inspection with the addition of a self-contained unit for four young people. Unused buildings have been demolished and a programme of landscaping is underway. There have been some delays in this caused by the heavy rainfall in recent months but much has been achieved. Plans are in place to proceed as soon as the ground has dried out sufficiently. The grounds are well lit.

The premises are well maintained and young people live in clean, comfortable and homely accommodation. Furnishings are of good quality. Young people personalise their bedrooms in accordance with their own taste. Communal rooms including shared bathrooms are clean, modern and domestic in style. Each unit has its own garden which provides sufficient space for young people to enjoy outdoor activities.

Not all dangerous substances are stored safely and this places young people's health and welfare at risk. Some cupboards are kept locked unnecessarily. For example, bedding, towels and toiletries are kept in a locked cupboard so young people have to ask staff for these items. This undermines the home's aim to provide a domestic setting that promotes young people's independence.

The home has cared for a number of different young people since the last inspection. Outcomes have been mixed. Some have made successful transitions home. Others have returned to a secure environment because of concerns for their safety. Some young people reduce their risk-taking behaviour and manage their emotions better. As a result, they display less aggression and less self-harming behaviour than in

previous placements. They begin to improve their social interaction and over time their self-confidence develops. Other young people continue to present challenging behaviour.

Serious incidents are well-managed. For example, staff follow young people who leave the premises in a state of anxiety and intercede to protect them from harm. They take action that promotes the welfare of missing young people. This includes maintaining contact with them by mobile phone and searching known addresses and areas that young people go to. Social workers express confidence that the home protects young people as well as possible, saying, 'they go above and beyond' to keep young people safe.

Although the home continues to work well with other agencies to promote the safety and welfare of young people, this is not always effective. Some of the young people currently in placement are at risk in the community because they are frequently missing. Their vulnerability places them at high risk of involvement in criminality and substance misuse.

Written risk assessments provide staff with guidance about the risks to individual young people. They mostly promote safe care. However, some risk assessments are not sufficiently robust to demonstrate that identified risks have been fully assessed. This undermines the safety of young people and others. Risk assessments for lone working are not always written up so the home cannot demonstrate it has taken into account the potential risks to staff and individual young people. Risk assessments relating to young people keeping tools in their bedrooms lack depth and analysis.

Staff files demonstrate safe recruitment and selection procedures are in place. Where concerns are raised about staff, the home acts promptly, working with the Local Authority Designated Officer and the police to ensure the safety of young people. The home reviews its systems and improves them as necessary as a result of lessons learned. It appropriately shares safeguarding concerns with other agencies and demonstrates very good collaborative working with a focus on protecting young people.

Young people benefit from having regular and frequent access to independent advocacy services. The advocate reports that young people express satisfaction with the quality of care in the home.

Most young people attend the on-site school. They receive additional tuition as required to help them achieve the best possible educational outcomes. For example, those interested in music have private tuition to develop their talents. This is in addition to music classes in school. Young people enjoy participating in community groups. They develop their hobbies, enhance their skills and meet peers with similar interests. Young people have the opportunity and encouragement to sit national examinations, including GCSEs.

Despite this, some young people's attendance and attainment levels reduce over time and they become increasingly disengaged with their education. Although the

home works hard to identify suitable college courses for those over school leaving age, young people do not always attend. This means the home has limited success in its aim of reintegrating young people into education. As a result, young people's education and future employability are compromised.

Some young people prefer not to engage with staff on outings and have limited engagement within the home. Instead, they maintain friendships with peers whose influence is negative. Some young people use the home's Wi-Fi to access social networking sites during the night. This impacts negatively on their emotional well-being and their ability to get up for school in the mornings.

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
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as practicable free from hazards to their safety and any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks. In particular, ensure cleaning fluids are stored safely and review children's use of social media during the night (Regulation 23 (a)(b))	11/04/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the care, education, supervision, support and, where appropriate, treatment, of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (1)(b))	11/04/2014
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the size of the children's home, the statement of purpose, and the number and needs of the children accommodated there; and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children accommodated, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a) (b))	16/05/2014

Recommendations

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

- encourage children and young people to practise the emergency escape plan so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)

- ensure that children and young people are helped by staff to achieve their educational goals. Work with the education provider to maximise each child's achievement and minimise underachievement (NMS 8.4)
- monitor the quality and adequacy of children's individual risk assessments and take action to improve these where necessary. In particular, ensure that risk assessments cover lone working with individual children and the suitability of children looking after their own tools (NMS 22.1)
- provide children and young people with prompt access to doctors and other health professionals, including specialist services, when they need these services. (NMS 6.4)

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*.