

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034083
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Cumbria County Council
Registered person address	Organisational Development The Courts, English Street CARLISLE CA3 8NA
Responsible individual	Lynette Marjorie Burns
Registered manager	Caroline Jane Reid
Date of last inspection	19/02/2014

Inspection date	20/08/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for children and young people	inadequate
Quality of care	inadequate
Keeping children and young people safe	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	inadequate
-------------------	-------------------

The overall judgement of inadequate has been reached because the home is unable to keep young people safe. The home's managers do not fully acknowledge the risks to young people, which limits their capacity to meet their needs.

At the full inspection in December 2013, this home was rated inadequate in all areas. Four requirements and a number of recommendations were issued. At their second full inspection in February 2014, the home was found to be adequate identifying that progress was made with the requirements and recommendations. However, since this time the home has admitted four new young people. Poor matching led to young people not being safe, their welfare compromised and criminal charges being brought against them. Subsequently three young people's placements have been terminated resulting in poor outcomes for these young people.

Although outcomes for young people are mixed and their progress has been variable, they say that they really like living at the home and feel supported by staff. However, some young people are not able to adhere to boundaries or acknowledge risks to their personal safety. This leads them into very risky situations in the local community.

Social workers commented on the good communication from the staff team. The home provides a comfortable, relaxing and homely environment for young people. Young people enjoy activities in the community and going on holiday with staff.

The home has a qualified, Registered Manager and a full staff team. Staff are fully inducted and receive some training in complex areas.

Currently staffing arrangements are suitable to adequately supervise and meet the needs of young people living at the home. However, there have been times over recent months where staffing has been inadequate to keep young people safe.

Seven new requirements have been made in relation to the shortfalls found on this inspection. These relate to the home not acting within its' Statement of Purpose, poor assessment of new admissions into the home. Behaviour management and the safety and welfare of young people in their care, staffing levels. Finally a requirement has been made about the monitoring of the home by the Regulation 33 visitor. Three recommendations have also been made.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2014	Full	adequate
19/12/2013	Full	inadequate
07/01/2013	Interim	good progress
18/06/2012	Full	adequate

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

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose (Regulation (4)(6))	26/09/2014
9 (2001)	ensure, having regard to the size of the children's home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs of the children accommodated there, carry on or manage the home with sufficient care, competence and skills. Specifically around the assessment of needs of children admitted to the children's home (Regulation (9)(1))	26/09/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the	26/09/2014

	safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; in particular, ensure that the home develops and implements strategies for reducing and ultimately preventing young people from going missing (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	
17B (2001)	ensure the registered person implements a written policy whereby appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the home(Regulation 17b (1)(b))	26/09/2014
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the Statement of Purpose, and the number and needs of the children accommodated there, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working in the children's home. In particular, review staffing arrangements over a 24hour period (Regulation 25 (1) (a) and (b))	26/09/2014
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are reasonably decorated and maintained; with particular regards to bedrooms for young people moving in (Regulation 31 (1)(e))	26/09/2014
33 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 33 (1))	26/09/2014
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the Statement of Purpose, and the number and needs of the children accommodated there, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working in the children's home. In particular ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme regarding professional and legal developments (Regulation 25 (1)(a)(b))	26/09/2014
12 (2001)	ensure that before providing accommodation in a children's home for a child who is not looked after by a local authority, prepare in consultation with the child's placing authority a placement plan for the child setting out, in particular about how, on a day to day basis, he will be cared for, and his welfare safeguarded and promoted by the home Regulation 12 (1)(B)(a).	26/09/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (MNS 1.3)
- ensure the home has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, discipline, control and restraint, that all staff understand and apply at all times (NMS 3.3)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure the registered manager exercise effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, such that the home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers sound, good quality care that meets the individual needs of each child at the home (NMS 14.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **inadequate**

This judgement is inadequate due to the home failing to ensure that the welfare of all young people is safeguarded. Outcomes for young people are poor. For example, three of the four young people admitted into the home since February 2014 saw their safety compromised and their placements terminated. The impact on the young people that remain at the home has been negative. Behaviour has deteriorated, including an increase of young people going missing, and a deterioration in the stability of young people's emotional well-being.

One young person has been in placement for several months and has established some relationships with staff. However, their specific needs impact significantly on the depth and quality of these relationships and consequently, it has also been difficult for them to engage fully with all the home has to offer.

Young people's health is generally good and they have access to a range of healthcare professionals to meet their needs, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). However, since the last inspection, some young people have exhibited risk-taking behaviour that may have a negative impact on their physical and emotional health. They find it difficult to engage with the support that has been put in place for them, which reduces the likelihood that the behaviour will change.

Young people have access to 25 hours per week education within local authority provision. Of the three young people that remain at the home, two have achieved 100% attendance. Another young person's attendance is currently 46% of the 25 hours on offer, which is minimal. However, both attendance and attainment can be adversely affected by lack of sleep and proper routines. For example, young people were absent for much of the night before the inspection and subsequently did not go to the planned activity for that day.

Young people benefit from positive contact with their families. Young people are consulted about the conduct of the home in terms of activities and menu planning. However at times staff have been unable to engage young people in discussions about the running of the home with the last session held over seven weeks ago. As a result young people are not making important decisions about the home and have few opportunities to contribute their ideas and requests in other ways.

Some young people are keen to work towards independence. They have good pathway plans developed by the Local Authorities Pathway worker. Young people say that they already have skills in cooking and housekeeping that will help them in young adulthood.

Quality of care

inadequate

The home provides poor quality care for young people. Poor care planning has resulted in poor behaviour management. For some young people, this had led to challenging behaviour not being effectively managed and as a result young people have been arrested and charged with multiple offences. This in turn has seen their placement at the home breakdown and young people unable to return to the home.

Four young people have been admitted to the home since the last full inspection, three have since had their placements terminated. The Registered Manager explains that the home requests information from the social worker and this is then discussed in a staff team meeting. The Registered Manager writes a compatibility assessment and a decision is made at the Local Authority panel if the placement is suitable. However compatibility of young people living in the home has not always been carefully matched. This has resulted in unsettled behaviour which has had an adverse effect on young people and the staff team. The assessments are duplicated from one young person to the next with very little changes made to the document. As a result assessments of individual needs are poorly made. The Registered Manager has not considered the unique needs of potential placements alongside the current young people's behaviours and needs; therefore, resulting in increased risks to young people and the community.

Consistency between the staff team is weak and effective communication is lacking. For example a sanction was given to a young person, which resulted in no treats, lifts or baking for three days as a result of going missing. However records revealed that during the three day sanction the young person had been taken to the beach, had an ice-cream from a restaurant chain and had baked sausage rolls. This also demonstrates that the management of behaviour at the home is poorly managed. Equally the management of behaviour is based on a reactive process rather than creating incentives for young people to achieve goals.

The home is located in a suburban area of a small sea-side town. The home itself generally provides a welcoming, homely and good, clean, quality environment. The kitchen is central to establishing and maintaining good relationships with young people through shared cooking and mealtimes. Young people have pleasant bedrooms which they can personalise. The home's communal areas are relaxing and comfortable. However, empty bedrooms are not prepared for new young people. It is the managers belief that it is better to involve the new young person with the personalisation of their room. However as a result rooms are of a poor standard and do not offer a welcoming good first impression when young people move into the home.

Young people have been missing a total of 22 times since February, with some young people missing over twenty four hours. When young people are missing their

whereabouts are unknown and their behaviour is unchecked. Multi-professional meetings have been called to develop strategies to manage the young people going missing, but it has been difficult to co-ordinate often with delays in getting professionals to meet together.

Support given by care staff to young people through individual sessions is minimal and do not address live issues that are effecting young people at the time. For example a serious safeguarding issue had taken place in the home yet a key worker session that took place shortly after the event discussed the topic of smoking. Comments from social workers, who have known the young people for a limited period are positive; for example, one agency social worker said that 'communication is very good; the home is proactive with information'. Another social worker said, '(the home) has been very supportive of young people and has made every provision to meet all aspects of the care plan. Contact with birth family has been facilitated'.

Education is actively promoted. Staff support young people to attend school, alternative provisions or college and work hard to resolve any initial misgivings that young people may have about attending. However, for some young people this remains limited. Social workers say that the home 'made every effort to provide education for young people, who have not wanted to engage'.

Staff support healthy lifestyle choices and work with young people to provide a good, wholesome diet. They encourage young people to participate in a variety of activities, ranging from local pastimes such as the cinema or visiting the local beach, to more ambitious activities such as visits to theme parks or large city tourist attractions. Although staff commented that funds for activities have been reduced, young people said that they receive a generous allowance for activities. Some young people have further positive engagement in the community and involved in fire cadets and scouting. Young people are therefore offered opportunities that enrich their lives.

Keeping children and young people safe inadequate

Young people are not safe due to the failure of staff to effectively manage challenging and risk-taking behaviours. Staff do not have the confidence and or experience to act as good parents when young people place themselves at risk of harm. While staff offer advice and guidance to young people, they lack sufficient authority to enforce boundaries, with some staff choosing to withdraw themselves from situations. This results in incidents being prolonged over many hours often until the early hours of the morning. There have been incidents where young people use household items , intimidation and self-harm that have not been handled appropriately. Consequently young people are not safe.

Incidents of restraints are zero and sanctions are low. Incidents of going missing from the home are high. For example, since February 2014, there have been 22 reports to the police, who have concerns about some young people's safety. Young

people are at risk of becoming involved in drug misuse, criminality, sexual exploitation and young people being harmed in other ways as a result of being out on the streets at night. Young people often return to the home in the early hours of the morning and cause a disruption. Pots of flowers have been smashed and other young people have been persuaded to leave the home via their upstairs bedroom windows. As night staff are not in place care staff, who sleep on the premises are disturbed and call the police. Young people are then subsequently charged with public order and criminal damage offences. This shows that staffing arrangements are inadequate to supervise or meet the needs of young people at the home.

There is a clear missing-from-home protocol to follow, with risk assessments that adequately record incidents of missing from home. This demonstrates that the homes process with regard to missing from home is sound. However, the Managers told the inspector that the frequency of young people going missing is reducing, but written evidence does not support this. Throughout the course of the inspection, a number of positive interpretations and assumptions have been made by managers regarding issues at the home. This demonstrates that managers either do not have or are not able to evaluate information and then use this to reduce risks to young people effectively.

The Registered Manager and staff do not effectively manage risk and as a result their safety is compromised. Young people have used an aerosol and cigarette lighter to set fire to a young person's door. The young people were arrested and charged with arson with intent to endanger life. Discussion with the Registered Manager confirmed that staff had failed to take appropriate action to reduce risks and safeguard young people, for example, the manager confirmed that it is the home's policy that aerosol items are not to be in the home, or should at least be handed over to staff for safe keeping, but this was a policy that had not been acted upon for some time. It is also their policy that young people should not be in possession of lighter's at night time. Following the fire setting incident, the Registered Manager confirmed that the policy is still not followed by staff and young people continue to have lighters in their possession. Young people therefore remain at risk of further fire setting incidents.

Recruitment procedures are adequately implemented to ensure only suitable persons work within the home. Health and safety routines within the home are effective at ensuring the physical safety of all who live in and visit the home with staff and young people regularly taking part in fire drills.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The home's Registered Manager is experienced and qualified. She provides consistent leadership to the staff team. Good progress has been made in addressing the recommendation from the last inspection, which has resulted in young people's records reflecting a more comprehensive picture of their time in the home particularly around incidents.

However, a couple of months before this inspection, the Registered Manager accepted young people whose assessed needs were unlikely to be met in this setting. There have been no positive outcomes for those young people, and there was no evidence that their risk-taking behaviour had diminished. Although some action has been taken by the home, the police and the local authority to address the situation, the home's managers have not robustly evaluated or addressed the risks.

The home has a clear, comprehensive Statement of Purpose. The Children's Guide is detailed and child-friendly. Both documents contain all the information required to inform parents, young people and social workers. However the home is not acting within its' Statement of Purpose as the home is for long-term care and the home has been used for respite for a young person from another home within the local authority. The home has also been used to monitor a supervision order following discharge from a young offender's institute. Although the Registered Manager stated the home could have offered long term care to these young people as a result of poor matching procedures both broke down within weeks of placement and had a devastating effect on the young people concerned and the home.

There is a full staffing complement. Agency staff are not used, but there are permanently employed relief staff, who are known to the young people, to fill any gaps in the rota. This helps to ensure consistency for young people and reduce anxiety associated with changes in staffing.

The home has sufficient staff sleeping in at night, but no waking night staff. On one occasion a friend of a young person had to ring the home to inform them of a serious issue in one of the bedrooms. Night time staffing arrangements have therefore been inadequate at times to safeguard young people living at the home.

Training for all staff in advanced and complex areas of practice such as attachment, going missing, self-harm and child sexual exploitation is slowly provided for care staff. A training programme has been developed and some staff have had the opportunity to attend some of the sessions.

The premises provide a physically safe environment for young people. There are regular and timely health and safety checks. The home conducts fire drills at varying times on a monthly basis, which exceeds requirements.

External monitoring visits take place twice a month and involve young people. A visit is made by an independent advocacy agency and another by a local counsellor. To date, the visits have been ineffective in raising the quality of care in the home. Some issues identified in this report have been overlooked, for example the compatibility of young people living at the home. As a result the monitoring of the home is not sufficiently robust and fails to raise standards of care for young people living at the home.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.