

Children's Home – Monitoring visit

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Type of inspection	Monitoring
Inspector	Heather Chaplin

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit took place in response to a judgement of inadequate that was made at the full inspection on 30 June 2016. On 15 July 2016, a compliance notice was issued in relation to the leadership and management quality standard. Eight statutory requirements were made in relation to breaches of regulation, together with seven recommendations to help the home to improve practice.

This monitoring visit focused solely on the home's progress against the compliance notice, and did not cover the other requirements or recommendations raised at the full inspection. As a result, seven of the eight requirements have been repeated. One requirement, made under Regulation 25 in relation to fire precautions, has been met in full and has not been repeated.

The compliance notice required the home to ensure that only young people whose needs it is able to meet are accommodated, in line with the statement of purpose. This was because the mix of young people in the home at the time of the full inspection placed residents and staff at risk of harm.

Between the full inspection and the monitoring visit, there have been no incidents of antisocial behaviour in the community, nor any young people going missing. Two of the five young people who were resident at the height of the home's difficulties have now moved on, and the remaining three residents are relatively settled in terms of their behaviour.

The service is conducting a major review of all its residential facilities. This has progressed well since the full inspection, and has included consultations with the young people and staff.

As part of this work, the registered manager has expressed the home's intention to return to its original remit of accommodating five young people who require emergency admissions and assessment. The plan is for the young people to live in the home for a maximum of 16 weeks. At this point, the service will work in partnership with other agencies and resources to help them progress to the next phase in their lives.

During the monitoring visit, the inspector discussed the suitability of the home to accommodate the intended five young people. Three bedrooms are currently occupied. The fourth bedroom is structurally suitable to admit young people, but requires redecoration before occupancy to remedy graffiti damage. The service's managers are aware that this work must be completed before a fourth young person can be admitted.

The fifth bedroom has been sub-divided to create a staff sleeping-in room, leaving the young person's bedroom as a narrow L-shape, measuring 1.55 metres in width. The home's senior managers confirmed that this room does not meet the local

authority's own specifications of 2.15 metres. They are now exploring various options which will enable them to create one good quality bedroom which is suitable for a young person. The construction work will take some time to plan and implement. The responsible individual confirmed to Ofsted that the service will not admit a fifth young person until this work has been completed.

When the home is in a position to admit young people for assessment, the registered manager's intention is for this process to contribute to the single assessment framework. She is aware that her staff will require additional training to undertake formal assessments.

At the full inspection, the emergency admission of a young person had contributed to a situation where the registered manager was unable to plan for sufficient staff to cover each shift. The home was required to ensure that there are sufficient staff to operate safely and meet the young people's needs.

The local authority's improvement plan includes a review of staffing arrangements across the services, with the aim that there will always be sufficient staff to meet the young people's needs. There has been insufficient time since the full inspection for this plan to be implemented. It is due to be launched on 12 September 2016.

During July, long-term sickness absences, combined with the challenges of finding staff during the holiday period, have brought additional difficulties. When the inspector arrived to conduct the monitoring visit, the situation in terms of numbers of staff on each shift had not changed in real terms since the full inspection. For example, the staffing rota shows that for four days from 23 to 26 July 2016, there were only two staff on duty on each shift for three young people.

On 23 July 2016, there was a serious incident when a young person, who was known to be feeling very anxious, made their way onto the nearby bridge and threatened to jump. Neither of the two staff on duty, one of whom was part of the 'casual' team of bank staff, was able to go out to be with him and possibly de-escalate the situation, because it would have left one person on their own. This left the young person unsupported at a time when they were very vulnerable. The situation was resolved by the police attending, and returning the young person to the staff's care.

Discussion took place about the importance of assessing each young person's staffing needs as an individual. For example, if one young person requires one-to-one staffing, and there are only two staff, this means that the second employee on shift has to care for however many other young people there are in the home at the time. If there is a crisis, as on the evening of 23 July, two staff are not sufficient. This element of the compliance notice has not been met.

During the monitoring visit, the registered manager's team leader arranged for two 'floating' members of staff to be deployed to the team immediately, raising the number of staff available by 1.5 full time equivalent persons. This is a positive temporary measure, pending the recruitment of additional permanent staff. For

this reason, the compliance notice has not been reissued.

The responsible individual has since confirmed that the local authority will hold the numbers of young people in the home at four, until the staffing arrangements have been improved.

The service was also required to ensure that staff receive effective, regular supervision appropriate to their level of training and experience. Although there are still some shortfalls in how supervision is recorded, all the staff in the home were supervised during July 2016. This element of the compliance notice is therefore met.

When the full inspection took place, there was no impact risk assessment in place for a young person who had been admitted in an emergency. The service was required to ensure that the individual risk assessments, the location risk assessment and impact risk assessments in relation to admission of new young people are always completed and reflect all known risks.

There have been no new emergency admissions since the full inspection. The registered manager confirmed that residential staff have access to the local authority's social care records system and can look up young people referred in an emergency, to see if they are known to the service. Discussion took place about the need to insist on some level of risk assessment from the social worker prior to accepting an emergency admission in future, if they are already known to the local authority. This aspect of the compliance notice has not yet been tested.

The commissioning team is sometimes sending referrals for planned admissions to the home without an individual risk assessment in place. For example, the registered manager received a referral for a young person who, on investigation, is at high risk for certain areas of vulnerability. The manager conducted an impact risk assessment, as required by the compliance notice, and this has shown that the young person would not have been a good match for some of the other residents. It is positive to see that, based on her assessment, the manager has made a professional decision not to accept this young person.

Individual risk assessments on the young people living in the home have not been updated since the previous inspection, because their behaviours have not changed. On this visit, the inspector found that one young person's risk assessment has not been personalised to his needs. Specifically, this does not include the risks of bullying, and yet this has been a clear concern for him. Risk assessment formats still require further work in order to be flexible to the young people's needs.

Due to difficulties described above in obtaining sufficient staff for the home, the registered manager and the deputy are still contributing to the shifts. This has had an impact on the management time available to them. The home was therefore required to ensure that policies, procedures and health and safety checks, including the statement of purpose, location risk assessment and fire safety checks, are up to date and comply with regulatory requirements and statutory guidance.

The home has made steady progress, in a relatively short period of time, on updating policies and procedures. Health and safety, as well as fire safety, checks are now up to date. There are good systems in place to ensure that these are monitored and remain on track. The requirement under Regulation 25 has been met, and has not been repeated.

The registered manager and other senior staff have visited other services, including those that have been rated outstanding by Ofsted. As a result, they have developed some ideas and are adapting these to this home. The registered manager has produced a detailed location risk assessment, which has been written since the previous inspection. This is a substantial piece of work, and it is a credit to her.

Since the full inspection, the registered manager has also updated the home's statement of purpose and has included a description of the home's location, which was previously missing. The statement of purpose still requires further improvement, including removing misleading information about the use of key fobs to lock and unlock the front door.

The manager said that these fobs have only been used when there was a young person with learning disabilities in the home, who had no awareness of personal safety on the road outside. The inspector advised that the home was not registered for young people for whom learning disability is the primary need, and that the key fobs should not be used to lock the exterior doors centrally. The statement of purpose must reflect this.

In light of the considerable progress that the home has made since the full inspection, and the provider's and registered manager's commitment to improvement, the compliance notice has not been reissued.

The home's grade has not been changed as a result of the monitoring visit. There will be a second full unannounced inspection, which does have the potential to change the home's rating, depending on the home's progress.

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is registered for up to five children and young people, irrespective of gender, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home's statement of purpose specifies that it takes young people in an emergency, and for assessment.

The provider has voluntarily agreed to limit the accommodation to four young people on a temporary basis, until permanent arrangements have been made for staffing the home, and the layout of the fifth bedroom has been resolved.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that 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
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to the removal of institutional features and upgrading the quality of the accommodation to promote a homely, comfortable, domestic environment, the registered person must ensure: (2)(c)(i) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.	27 July 2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to conducting risk assessments on all new admissions and their potential impact on existing residents, providing staff with clear strategies to follow in terms of behaviour management and completing a location risk assessment that evaluates hazards in the proximity of the home, the registered person must: (1) ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to	27 July 2016

keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure: (a) that staff: (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare, and (c) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to reviewing the home's remit and the safety of mixing emergency admissions with long term placements, ensuring that there are sufficient staff on duty to meet the young people's needs and ensuring that care planning and policy documents are accurate and kept up to date, the registered person must: (1) enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that: (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential, and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to: (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child (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 (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on:	27 July 2016

(i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
16: Statement of purpose (1) The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (3)(a) The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it. In particular, ensure that the statement of purpose contains all the elements listed in Schedule 1 and that it is revised and updated in line with the current Children's Homes Regulations, April 2015. (Regulation 16 (1) and (3))	08/08/2016
21: Privacy and access (1) The registered person must ensure that: (a) the privacy of children is appropriately protected (b) children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises, and (c) any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises: (i) is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home (ii) is necessary and proportionate (iii) is kept under review and, if necessary, revised, and (iv) allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. In particular, ensure that the home has a front door that can be secured against unauthorised intrusion without restricting the young people's liberty, that young people have access to all communal areas of the home at all times, and that they are provided with their own keys to enable them to access their own bedrooms. (Regulation 21 (1))	08/08/2016
32: Fitness of workers (1) The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment	08/08/2016

procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (2) The registered person may only: (a) employ an individual to work at the children's home, or (b) if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (3) The requirements are that: (d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. In particular, ensure that persons who have worked overseas are subject to full criminal record checks, including obtaining information from each overseas country where they have been employed. (Regulation 32 (1)–(3) and Schedule 2)	
33: Employment of staff (4)(b) The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. In particular, ensure that staff receive regular, effective and well-recorded supervision appropriate to their level of experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	27 July 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that emergency admissions are not taken unless the home's statement of purpose and its capacity and support systems mean that it has the capability to care for children admitted at very short notice while continuing to offer high quality care to children already living in the home. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.6).
- Ensure that children are provided with nutritious meals suitable for each child's needs. (Guide to the Children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.8).

- Ensure that the children's home seeks as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. In particular, this relates to the exterior presentation and interior decoration of the home. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9).
- Ensure that, just as in a family home, children are able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (Regulation 21 (c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.10).
- Ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with Regulation 33 (4)(b). (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 61, paragraph 13.3).
- Ensure that staff are aware of the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014), which sets out the steps that local authorities and their partners should take to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do go missing. Children's homes should have regard to the relevant aspects of this guidance. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.25).
- Ensure that when a child is found, they are offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (i.e. someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, page 14, paragraphs 31 and 32).

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

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