

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	30 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC034211
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Patricia Harding
Inspector	Heather Chaplin

Inspection date	30 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC034211

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- The home has recently accepted some young people who were admitted in an emergency, without a formal risk assessment. The resulting negative interactions between new and existing residents has compromised the safety of the young people, staff and people in the community.
- Several young people are alleged to have committed offences; specifically, anti-social and unsafe behaviour in the community and in the home. This includes assaults on staff, taking a car and a moped without consent and causing damage at a city centre restaurant. In addition, the mix of young people has led to bullying, going missing, drug misuse, an attempt to set a fire within the home and discriminatory behaviour.
- The emergency admission of young people whose needs are not known or assessed also makes it extremely difficult for the registered manager to plan for sufficient staff to ensure the safety of everyone in the home. It is not always easy to secure casual staff, and there are occasions when there are insufficient staff to manage all of the young people, particularly those with complex behaviour.
- In addition, the registered manager's need to respond to crises within the home, together with the loss of one of her two deputy managers through sickness absence, has meant that there has been considerable pressure on the management team. Consequently, a number of key management tasks have not been completed.
- A compliance notice has been issued in relation to the leadership and management of the home. In addition to the above breaches of regulation, a number of recommendations have been made to help improve practice.

The children's home strengths

- The staff team is diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, age and gender. Staff members are experienced, skilled, well qualified and child-focused. External professionals confirm that they have been successful in engaging some very challenging young people and in helping to bring about major improvements in their circumstances.
- The outcomes for some young people have been good. The two young people who have achieved the most positive outcomes have largely kept themselves away from the recent difficulties in the home.
- The young people are well supported to attend school or college, although not all of them do. One young person is studying on an access to music course, and is predicted to obtain good grades. Another young person has made good progress in learning English language and culture, and is starting his second year in college, learning English as a second language.
- Social workers and independent reviewing officers who have placed children at this home are very positive about the staff's commitment to the young people. One young person said, 'they help me speak English – the staff are very good.'
- Staff promote the young people's independence skills and positive involvement in the local community, including making links with their own culture and heritage. Staff have worked hard to learn more about the Islamic faith in order to better understand one young person's needs.
- The responsible individual has been asked to lead an ambitious residential services improvement programme, which is currently in the consultation stage. The plan reflects the need to involve the staff and young people.

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 with 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— 12.(1) ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to 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	27 July 2016

(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— 13. (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— (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.	27 July 2016
16: Statement of purpose 16.(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.	8 August 2016

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)).	
21. Privacy and access 21 (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)).	8 August 2016
25. Fire precautions 25.(1) After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— (d) ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. In particular, ensure that fire drills are conducted at intervals recommended for residential premises, including during the hours of darkness. (Regulation 25 (1))	8 August 2016
32. Fitness of workers 32.(1) The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment 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	8 August 2016

(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 33 (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

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

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, April 2015, 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, April 2015, paragraph 3.8).
- Ensure 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, April 2015, 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, April 2015, 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, April 2015, 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, April 2015, 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 (January 2014), paragraphs 31 and 32).

Full report

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 remit is to take short term and emergency admissions.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21 October 2015	Full	Requires improvement
19 February 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
8 October 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
The home's admission policy and lack of effective risk management has meant that some young people in the home have not been safe in the home or outside it, and their behaviour has been harmful to themselves and to others. Recently, this has led to poor outcomes for some young people, including an increase in the number and severity of their alleged offences. Two young people's placements have ended prematurely. This meant that the local authority was unable to plan these placement endings as they would have wished, to ensure a smooth transition for the young people concerned. Incidents in the home have meant that young people's sleep has been disrupted. The home's only vehicle was damaged by some of the young people and was out of action for several days, which meant that it was not available for any of the young people who may have needed it. The home's managers are working extremely hard to maintain good order and safety. This has meant that they sometimes have to cover vacant shifts, and consequently have less management time. A number of management tasks have not been undertaken as required, and some of these have safeguarding implications. Although the staff work hard to ensure that young people's healthcare needs are met, some of the young people receive a poor quality diet. Although the staff encourage them to eat healthy foods and they provide well-balanced meals, such as roast dinners with vegetables, these are not always consumed. Other young people have received tailored, culturally sensitive support to follow their own dietary and religious traditions. One professional said that 'X has not found adjusting to English foods that easy, and the staff have been proactive in trying to provide foods that X would find more accepting, by taking him out shopping and allowing him to choose foods he would like.' The staff work hard to establish and maintain positive relationships with the young people. For some young people, this has had a positive impact on their lives. The reviewing officer for a young asylum seeker complimented the staff on providing the young person with books and other resources to help him learn English, so that by his third review, he was confident in speaking the language.	

The staff and managers consult the young people well. They have opportunities to express their views during key worker sessions and regular house meetings. One professional said, 'X seems to have settled very well and quite quickly with the staff team and other young people, and he speaks positively about his keyworker and enjoys meeting regularly with him.'

External professionals unanimously supported the staff and manager with very positive comments about the care provided. One social worker said, 'I have been kept very well informed by staff... with relevant updates regarding (X's) care and any concerns regarding his presentation. X's keyworker... was able to give me a very informative handover when we met and it is clear that X has a good relationship with him.'

The young people have been consulted about the local authority's plans for the home, and have contributed their views about the refurbishment in progress. This includes choosing furniture and other items to make the garden a homely and attractive space.

Educational and training outcomes for the five young people most recently resident have been mixed. The staff have worked effectively to support two young people in their college placements. These young people have done extremely well, and are continuing in education. Some young people are without education, training or employment, but have been encouraged to attend courses and become involved with The Prince's Trust. Staff help the young people to apply for apprenticeships and guide them towards appropriate resources to help them search for employment.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
Young people are not always protected from harm because the home's managers have failed to ensure that they are not exposed to offending, risk-taking or otherwise unsafe behaviour. At the interim inspection in March 2016, the group of young people was relatively settled, but since that date, and particularly over the last two weeks of June 2016, new admissions have led to an increase in serious incidents. These have included:	

- Offending behaviour: vehicle theft; criminal damage in the home and in the community; assaults on and racial abuse towards staff. Three young people allegedly targeted a local restaurant, causing damage and necessitating police involvement.
- Inappropriate peer interactions, including bullying and attempts at financial exploitation of a vulnerable young person who has mental health needs.
- Young people have told the staff that they have misused drugs, including some that may have a serious effect on health.
- Some young people have been observed inciting peers to be aggressive towards staff.
- The two most recently admitted young people have had a major argument, resulting in one of them being too fearful to return to the home.
- There was an attempt to set a fire on the landing, resulting in damage to a carpet.

In addition, young people have been reported as missing on 25 occasions since the full inspection in October 2015. These incidents have involved four young people, and 17 have involved one young person who is no longer resident. The most recent incidents involving present residents, although few in number, have been associated with the risk-taking and offending behaviour described above, and so the consequences were serious.

The home does not have a missing-from-home log, and also did not have a copy of the 'Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014)'.

When young people cannot be located, the staff do try hard to find them and persuade them to return. On each day during the inspection, they visited a young person who had been missing, but was then located but refused to return to the home. During the period of his absence, the staff visited him daily to check on his welfare and offer any help that he needed.

The registered person has not ensured that when young people go missing, they receive a 'return home' interview from an independent person within the timescales specified in the statutory guidance. None of the 25 missing incidents have been followed up by a return home interview. This means that the young people do not have this formal opportunity to talk about the factors that led to them going missing, and about anything else that may be worrying them about

what happened during their absence. A recommendation has been made.

The registered manager has not monitored the regularity and effectiveness of fire drills to ensure that they take place at the intervals recommended for residential premises by the fire and rescue service. One fire drill was carried out at night in January 2015, but not since. There has only been one fire drill so far this year. When this was raised with the manager during the inspection, she instigated a programme of drills, including one at night. Fire alarms are tested weekly, as recommended.

Staff recruitment is managed by a central local authority human resources department. Staff files in the home were not complete, but the missing information was in the human resources department and was emailed during the inspection. The main deficit found was the lack of a complete criminal record check for a member of staff who has worked overseas for three years. The Disclosure and Barring Service covers periods of time spent in the UK, but there is no certificate of good conduct to cover the period when this person was working out of the country.

Concerns about the quality of the environment have been raised at successive inspections. Although some improvements have been made and more are planned, the environment still does not respect the dignity of the young people by providing a safe, secure, domestic and comfortable home for them. The shortfalls include:

- A superfluous wheelchair access ramp with scaffold-pole type rails, despite the fact that the home is not registered to accept children with disabilities, and there are no facilities for visitors with disabilities inside. This ramp was constructed in response to a policy decision to equip all the local authority's public buildings with access for people with disabilities. This does not reflect the unique position of children's homes within the authority.
- The front door has a key pad and magnetic catches, which were faulty and insecure at the start of the inspection. This potentially allowed young people to admit unauthorised persons to the home.
- Internal doors are locked at night. This would not happen in a normal domestic setting.
- Young people do not have their own bedroom door keys, even those who have demonstrated consistently responsible behaviour. They either have to ask staff for access to their own bedrooms, or leave their doors on the latch. This exposes the young people to the potential for theft from their rooms.

This has happened recently.

- Since the home was first registered, one bedroom has been subdivided to create a separate staff sleeping-in room. This has left one young person's bedroom cramped, and an awkward L-shape. This does not provide a relaxing and homely environment. The suitability of this room for young people was discussed with the registered manager and her senior colleagues.
- The hallways, bedrooms, landing, bathrooms and stairs all require refurbishment in a domestic style.

Since the inspection, the head of service has produced an action plan which makes a commitment to resolve the environmental and other shortfalls.

As a local authority home, the managers and staff have ready access to child protection professionals, local police, safeguarding training and consultation when required, to help them keep children and young people safe. There have been no child protection referrals or allegations made about staff since the previous inspection.

Staff also receive good quality, regularly updated training in positive handling and behaviour management. There has only been one physical intervention since the previous inspection. This was managed and recorded appropriately.

There is a system of rewards in the home to help the young people celebrate achievements. Consequences set have been fair and appropriate.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
Leadership and management are inadequate because the registered manager has little or no control over emergency admissions. The manager evaluates and challenges inappropriate planned referrals, but cannot prevent an emergency bed from being used. The most recently-admitted young person was known to the department, but no impact risk assessment was completed to evaluate the impact of this young person on existing residents.	

Unless risk assessments are made a prerequisite for all admissions, the home is unable to predict any likely problems and put measures in place to safeguard existing residents from the behaviour and influence of new young people.

The staff support each other well and have responded appropriately to this unacceptable behaviour when it has arisen. The statement of purpose makes it clear that discrimination will not be tolerated, and the home uses restorative approaches to challenge unacceptable behaviour. In practice, when key working sessions have not brought about any improvement, there is no stated alternative strategy in place.

There is sometimes an insufficient number of experienced permanent staff to manage complex and volatile situations. Staff numbers vary from two to three on each shift. The staff feel confident that three people are sufficient to manage most situations, but when two staff are on duty, there is no margin for safety should the situation deteriorate.

The pressures on the staff team sometimes necessitate the home's managers supporting the young people and staff by working on shift to provide safe cover. This has an impact on some management tasks.

The home's risk assessments, fire drills and other paperwork tasks are not always completed, which indicates that management monitoring is not fully effective. For example, there is no location risk assessment in place, and the community risk assessment does not include obvious hazards such as a high railway bridge a short walk from the home. Behaviour management plans for young people do not contain clear strategies for action. The home has a development plan in place, but it is not a robust assessment of strengths and shortfalls, with clear actions and timescales.

The home was inspected on 23 March 2016, when it was found to have sustained effectiveness. Five new requirements were made. The home has made some progress towards meeting these requirements, but there is still further work to be done.

The requirement under the quality and purpose of care standard to improve the quality of the environment has been partially actioned, but has been repeated. Work is required in the following areas:

- Outside the home, there is a superfluous wheelchair access ramp with scaffold-pole type rails, despite the fact that the home is not registered to accept children with disabilities, and there are no facilities for visitors with disabilities inside.

- One bedroom which has been subdivided since the home was first registered, to create a separate staff sleeping-in room. This has left one young person's bedroom cramped, and an awkward L-shape. This does not provide a relaxing and homely environment.
- The hallways, bedrooms, landing, bathrooms and stairs all require refurbishment in a domestic style.

The inspector was told that removal of the disabled access ramp is part of the home's development plan.

The requirement made at the interim inspection regarding the need to review the statement of purpose has also been repeated. Although the home's statement of purpose provides a comprehensive description of the service, the document has not been fully updated in line with Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. Although most areas are covered and the statement of purpose is a readable and user-friendly document, there are some omissions, such as a detailed description of the home's location.

The requirement made under Regulation 33 has been repeated, because there are still some staff who have not received regular supervision. One relatively new staff member, who has been on her induction, has only received three supervision sessions since January of this year. Furthermore, supervision sessions are not recorded in any detail, so there is no clear record of the discussions. This does not provide an accurate record showing accountability in practice. A recommendation has also been made.

The remaining two requirements from the interim inspection, regarding behaviour management records and the appointment of an independent visitor to conduct Regulation 44 visits to the home, are both now met.

The single recommendation from the previous inspection is partially met. The manager has reviewed the system for recording complaints, but there are still pieces of paper stapled into the log. There is no space for recording the outcome of complaints. As there have been no complaints since the previous inspection, this was discussed with the manager and no further recommendation has been made on this occasion. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

The local authority has appointed a senior manager to oversee a residential improvement project to work on identified areas for development at all the local authority's children's homes. Although this plan is robust and conveys a commitment to positive change, the project is in its early stages and consultation with the young people and staff is still under way.

The staff unanimously said that they find the home's managers supportive and kind. They make time for the staff, they are available for informal consultation and

promote effective training and development.

The registered manager and the deputies are experienced and suitably qualified for their roles. The registered manager has over 30 years' experience in childcare.

The staff team is committed, exceptionally child-centred and dedicated to the task. Staff are ethnically diverse, highly experienced and many have worked in the home for several years. All the staff hold at least a qualification at level 3 and have had the opportunity to engage in continuing training. Some staff are qualified social workers, and all have a broad range of life experiences, which bring a fresh dimension to their work in the home.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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