

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034301
Inspection date	02/02/2012
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	13/09/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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.

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 (March 2011)*.

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.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for five young people of either sex, aged 11 to 17 years at any one time, who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory** progress.

The overall effectiveness of this service was judged to be good at the full inspection in May 2011. The service is judged to have made satisfactory progress during the interim period. One recommendation was imposed, following the previous inspection, which has been met. Staff now feel more supported and better understand the context of the challenging behaviour presented by young people. This is as a result of the support given by occupational health and the service manager.

Further shortfalls have also been identified with regard to some long-standing practices in the home. While the internal standard of accommodation and facilities are good, the metal grids on the office windows can be seen by passers by and make the home appear institutionalised. The locking of external doors means that there are times when young people cannot leave the building without reference to staff. The home is not registered as a secure unit and staff are potentially restricting the liberty of young people. The external line manager of the home has agreed to conduct an immediate review of the arrangements. One identified shortfall relates to the lack of recording in relation to measures of control. Examples include occasions when young people are not transported by staff as a result of dangerous behaviour in vehicles and when they make reparation for damage out of their reward money. Although young people say they are treated fairly, it is not possible to objectively and fully assess whether this is the case. While an appropriate record is kept of incidents of physical restraint, these are not always entered within a timely manner and do not contain all the detail required, such as the dates of each incident and the names of other people present. It is also not possible to track whether young people have been offered medical examinations when they claim they have been injured during a restraint. Finally, while the Statement of Purpose describes the services provided it does not inform people of the contact details for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI).

Despite these shortfalls young people speak positively of their experience of living in the home. Educational arrangements are identified for young people and staff support them to sustain these. Young people have access to a good range of leisure activities, with each being supported to pursue individual interests.

The stability of the home has been affected by the admission of three young people within a short period of time. While the needs of the young people were initially assessed as being compatible, in practice, this has not been the case to date. There are a considerable number of incidents when young people have been missing. Concerns about the individual safety of young people and the frequency with which they go missing have been appropriately referred to social workers and the safeguarding team. Staff have contributed to the subsequent strategy meetings and implemented the agreed strategies to protect young people. During the absence of the Registered Manager and another senior member of staff, staff have been able to maintain placements for these young people. This has allowed time for consideration to be given to the continuing suitability of the placements and for long-term plans to be formulated and implemented. There are indications that, as a result of the support they continue to receive from staff, some young people are beginning to settle.

Overall, behaviour is managed well with little use of physical restraint. Staff consistently use de-escalation techniques, positive reinforcement and restorative justice to manage behaviour. They maintain a positive approach and spend time reasoning and talking with young people. Staff say they have been well supported by occupational health and the line manager following a serious incident in which some staff sustained injuries. Young people say 'the home is an alright place to live and staff are reasonable and fair'. They do not, however, like or benefit from the current constant changes in the staff team. This is only a recent and temporary occurrence. The action taken has been necessary to maintain staffing levels at the required level during the unforeseen absence of some key and permanent members of staff.

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
4 (2001)	ensure the address and telephone number of the HMCI is included in statement of purpose and children's guide (Regulation 4(3))	27/04/2012
17 (2001)	ensure that no use of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home- ensure that the use of locks is based on careful risk assessment that allows children as much freedom as possible, consistent with the need to keep them safe (Regulation 17 (1); Guidance and	16/03/2012

	regulations vol. 5. 2.108)	
17 (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all the detail within Regulation 17 (3) and Regulation 17(4)	16/03/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that no children's home restricts the liberty of any child as a matter of routine or provides any form of secure accommodation unless that home is an approved secure children's home (NMS 3.19)
- ensure that written records demonstrate whether young people, who complain of being injured during a restraint, have been offered the opportunity to be medically checked (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel- this refers to the metal grills on the front windows of the house (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Ensure such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible placing authority and if appropriate the parents. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that specific measures, such as the locking of internal and external doors, are outlined within a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use and how children will be protected from abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)