

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035154
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Northgate House Northgate Halifax West Yorkshire HX1 1UN
Responsible individual	Gary Pickles
Registered manager	Donna Maria Keith
Date of last inspection	10/02/2014

Inspection date	18/07/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	Three compliance notices were issued on 18 February 2014 in relation to safeguarding young people and promoting their welfare, ensuring that Ofsted was informed of notifiable incidents without delay, and improvements to independent monitoring arrangements. A monitoring visit on the 22 April found that the provider had made the required improvements to monitoring arrangements. Sufficient action was being taken to safeguard young people and improve the timeliness of notifications to Ofsted. It was noted however that the success of these actions would be judged over time.

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

Overall effectiveness

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

This home is judged inadequate because it does not consistently safeguard young people and effectively promote their welfare, or provide them with the supervision, care and attention they need.

The home is not a happy, comfortable or safe place to live. It often replicates the kind of situations that originally caused young people to be removed from the care of their parents, such as witnessing violent incidents, drug use and lack of parental control. The home is unable to keep young people safe because it cannot limit risk-taking behaviours such as drug use and young people going missing from the home.

Young people are not safe in the home as young people from the community have been able to gain access to the property without the knowledge of staff. Young people do not always feel safe at the home because staff are unable to break the pattern of intimidating and violent behaviour of others.

The quality of care provided for young people is adequate. Some young people have positive views about their care and feel that their basic needs are met. The majority feel that staff listen to the views they have about their care and support them with their education.

The Registered Manager works well in partnership with other agencies. She advocates on behalf of young people but leadership and management is ineffective overall. The Registered Manager is aware of what needs to change to improve young people's lives but the pace of improvement is unacceptably slow. There is an inability to reinforce and sustain positive change even in the short term.

Three compliance notices were issued in February 2014 in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, notifying Ofsted about serious events and the quality of independent visits to the home.

Improvement has been achieved in the level and quality of scrutiny provided by the independent visitors. This good progress is being sustained. These visits are now much more comprehensive and offer real challenge to the provider. Some improvement is also noted in the timeliness of notifiable events.

However significant shortfalls remain in relation to keeping young people safe. Due to the seriousness of the failure to safeguard children and promote their welfare a compliance notice is to be issued to the registered person. This is to ensure immediate action is taken to improve the safety and welfare of young people.

Serious concerns have also emerged with regard to the management of the home and the lack of consultation with parents and social workers. Compliance notices are to be issued to the registered person on these matters. This is to ensure the home is managed with sufficient care, competence and skill and to ensure monitoring takes into account the views of parents and social workers.

A number of requirements and recommendations are also raised to improve the quality of care for young people and comply with regulations. These refer to behaviour management, planning for independence and the supervision and training of staff, accuracy in the statement of purpose, notifications, monitoring and the condition of the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is provided by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to five young people of either gender, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
21/05/2013	Full	good
15/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
07/08/2012	Full	good

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)	22/08/2014
9 (2001)	ensure that the registered provider and registered manager shall, 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 (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill (Regulation 9)(1)	22/08/2014
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children	22/08/2014

	accommodated there and make proper provision for the care, education, supervision, support and, where appropriate, treatment of children accommodated there (Regulation 11)(1)(a)(b)	
17 (2001)	ensure that no measure of control or discipline or contrary to paragraph (2) shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home. This is specifically in relation to any measure which involves the punishment of a group of children for the behaviour of an individual child (Regulation 17)(j)(ii)	22/08/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. Specifically, the professional supervision of the Registered Manager should always include active consideration of all safeguarding matters at the home (Regulation 27(a))	22/08/2014
30 (2001)	ensure that if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30)(1)	22/08/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that visits by the independent person report on their opinion as to whether children accommodated at the home are effectively safeguarded and whether the conduct of the home promotes the well-being of the children accommodated there (Regulation 33)(8)	22/08/2014
34 (2001)	ensure that the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34)(3)	01/10/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people are provided with a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that all new staff work towards level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma within 6 months confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- appoint a personal advisor and prepare an assessment of the eligible child's needs. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning

Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **inadequate**

Outcomes for young people are inadequate. Some young people spend a significant proportion of their time out of the home. They live at the home on their own terms, dictating when they will and won't be there. Staff are unable to curtail or reduce these absences. This limits opportunities for staff to engage with them and help them to achieve positive change.

Other young people reach such a level of distress that they are unable to accept help until they are at the point of breakdown. This often results in damage to the home and threats against staff. Young people who achieve stability over the longer term have better prospects but are affected by these violent and disruptive incidents. They still feel the need to have a panic alarm.

Young people do recognise the importance of education and take some advantage of their educational opportunities, although not always on a regular basis. It is hard to say what their actual attendance levels are as the Registered Manager does not monitor this. Young people are sometimes motivated to get themselves to their places of education and do so even when they are missing from the home.

Some young people have achieved the levels of educational attainment expected of them. They have secured places at college to further their education. There is only one young person who has positive engagement with their family and activities in the wider community. For other young people, relationships in the community are related to drug use or pursuing contact with families that have not been agreed as being helpful to them or their families.

Young people have access to all the standard health care facilities. There is particularly good emphasis on ensuring that young people know and use sexual health services. Young people do receive support from staff and specialist agencies to tackle their drug use. However despite the efforts of staff and other agencies this remains a significant problem for young people.

Young people are successfully supported to engage with mental health professionals. As a result young people are now receiving appropriate assessment and intervention, and taking the prescribed medication they need.

A personal advisor has not yet been appointed for a young person to help them plan for independence. The manager has pursued this and ensures that young people acquire the practical skills they will need for adult life. However delays in providing formal pathway planning creates delay and uncertainty for young people.

Quality of care**adequate**

Young people have some positive views on some aspects of the care and support they receive. The majority feel that staff help them feel good about themselves and respect their culture. Young people feel that staff help them to deal with their worries. They say that they can talk to any member of the staff team and feel that they have particularly good relationships with their key workers. They know how to make a complaint. Any concerns are responded to promptly.

Young people say they understand what plans are being made for the future and feel involved in this process. The majority of young people feel they are helped with their education, health and in managing their behaviour, even though they accept that they do not always act on staff advice.

Where young people commit to staying at the home there is some effective key working which helps them think through the impact of their behaviours. These interventions help to guide young people towards more positive decision-making.

Staff work closely alongside social workers and other professionals to implement plans made for young people. There is effective work with other agencies to make sure that young people get the services they need. For example, the home has constructive links with the local police who visit and address matters with young people using a 'restorative justice' approach. Staff make good efforts to work closely with parents and other relatives. This helps to achieve consistency of care for young people as well as helping them to maintain close relationships with their families.

Arrangements for the storage and taking of medicines are safe and effective. Staff exercise sensible precaution and seek expert advice about medication where required. This protects young people from any potential adverse reactions.

The home is under continual repair and maintenance. This is because of the damage caused by young people and because of the normal wear and tear of any household. Serious damage is immediately attended to in most circumstances.

Other tasks such as redecoration of the home and replacement of carpets is taking much longer to achieve and no timescales have been set for their completion. There are also a number of minor repairs such as split door panels and loose door handles that need attention. This does not create a comfortable and homely environment for young people.

Keeping children and young people safe**inadequate**

Young people are not adequately safeguarded at the home. They have mixed feelings about whether they feel safe at there. Parents and professionals also express anxiety about the safety of young people at the home.

Some young people have refused to live there as they feel unsafe. They do not always feel confident about reporting concerns and some report that they are not always welcomed back after going missing from the home.

These anxieties are largely related to how behaviour is managed. Young people are witness to other young people threatening staff with violence and causing sometimes considerable damage to the home. Although young people remove themselves from such incidents, having to live in a climate where violence may erupt at any time is very damaging for young people. As a result one young person still feels the need to keep a panic alarm.

Staff are unable to effectively challenge young people so that such incidents are reduced. Behaviour management strategies are not reviewed when they are found to be ineffective or unfair. For example, young people who have now left school or who have non-school days cannot watch television in the main lounge during school hours. This is because one young person refuses to go to school. This punishes the whole group because of the non-cooperation of one individual.

Young people are unclear whether this is a home that does restraint or not. The Statement of Purpose contradicts itself, saying in one section physical restraint may be used and in another part saying it is not technique used by this local authority.

The manager and staff have recently accepted that physical intervention may be required and even useful in some situations to protect young people, staff and property. However, in an effort to ensure that physical intervention remains a last resort, staff training has lapsed.

Young people are put in considerable danger because young people from the community are able to gain access to the home. Local youths were found, on the second day of this inspection, to have stayed overnight in a young person's bedroom without the knowledge of staff. Alarm systems on the fire exit, which young people had opened to let their friends in, have either not been working or are unable to be heard in the staff bedrooms.

Young people sometimes go missing from the home for several days at a time. Staff often make telephone contact with young people. However staff do not follow the clearly laid out instructions in risk assessments to contact parents or seek the whereabouts of young people at known addresses.

Staffing levels are not sufficient to implement the requirements of such risk assessments. For example, a risk assessment notes that two members of staff should visit a known address when a particular young person goes missing. However the

staffing of the rota does not allow for this, so such visits are not made. This leaves young people exposed to unnecessary risk and fails to ensure their speedy return to the home.

Staff do not take sufficient action to check on young people when they do return after an absence. For example one young person went to school despite being missing from the home for several days. However when the school has told the home that a young person has arrived for lessons, no one from the home took the opportunity to go down and see the young person. This does not convey to young people that staff have been worried about them or are concerned about their welfare.

Due to the seriousness of the failure to safeguard children and promote their welfare a compliance notice is to be issued to the registered person. This is to ensure immediate action is taken to improve the safety and welfare of young people.

Investigations into any allegations against staff are promptly investigated in a fair and competent manner. The home also responds very quickly to any concerns about possible risk from child sexual exploitation but the Registered Manager has failed to notify Ofsted of this concern. This prevents the regulator from taking further action should this be required. There has also been some inconsistency in notifying Ofsted in a timely manner about notifiable events.

No new members of staff have been appointed to the home for some time. The provider has suitable vetting arrangements in place to ensure that new employees do not present a risk to young people.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The Registered Manager has managed this home for several years and has an appropriate management qualification. There is evidence of some good relationships between staff and young people and some positive views expressed by associated professionals.

However the registered provider and Registered Manager are not able to demonstrate a capacity for continuing improvement. The home has declined in performance since the last full inspection in May 2013 with new concerns about the ability of the home to protect young people.

Due to the seriousness of the failure to manage the home sufficient care, competence and skill a compliance notice is to be issued to the registered person. This is to ensure immediate action is taken to improve management of the home for the benefit of young people.

There is a lack of urgency in driving forward improvement and insufficient

consultation. Deadlines are rarely set for addressing areas of concern and actions are not met in a timely manner. Progress demonstrated at the monitoring in April 2014 on compliance issues has not been sustained.

The independent visitor has complied with the new regulations to seek permission from social workers and young people to view their files. However the report does not explicitly state the visitor's opinion as to whether children accommodated at the home are effectively safeguarded and whether the conduct of the home promotes the well-being of the children accommodated there.

The Registered Manager has been not been able to sustain progress with regard to notifiable incidents. Although there has been some recent improvement the timeliness of notifications this has been inconsistent. Ofsted were not notified about a young person's risk to child sexual exploitation. This impedes the regulator from taking action to protect children should this be necessary.

The Registered Manager does not respond quickly enough to problems when they arise. Some of these are low level concerns, but others are not.

For example, following their visit to the home on the 26th of June 2014 the independent visitor asked that grass cuttings from the back of the home were removed. During the same visit a parent had expressed concerns to the independent visitor about the home. The Responsible Individual asked the Registered Manager to look into this. At the time of this inspection these matters were still not addressed.

A number of concerns emerge with regard to the support of staff. The home does not meet the objectives in the Statement of Purpose which says that staff will be supervised every month, and new members of staff every two weeks. Some staff have not yet started on the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma despite working in the local authority's children's home for nearly a year. This means that staff may not be able to meet the needs and challenges that young people present.

The Responsible Individual has delegated supervision of the Registered Manager to a senior member of staff. However supervisions have not been conducted within timescales agreed following the last monitoring visit. This does not give her the clear support and direction needed.

The ability of the Registered Manager to fully control matters in the home is undermined on occasion. A panel has been established to look at the needs of vulnerable children and young people. However this makes decisions about the length of placement for young people without reference to the Registered Manager. This means the panel do not have full information or necessarily understand the challenges and impact of such decisions on young people at the home.

The Registered Manager has improved her monitoring of the home through better

consultation with children and young people. However the process still lacks evidence of any consultation with social workers and parents and so misses the opportunity to take into account their views. This is a requirement that was set at inspections in May 2013 and February 2014 and has not been fully met. A compliance notice will be issued to address this repeated failure to comply with the regulation.

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.