

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	20/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC035339
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Dianne Chesters
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd

Inspection date	20/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. The home has continued to provide good levels of support to children who have highly complex emotional and behavioural needs. Children's placements are stable and they report that they feel settled and relaxed at the home. One is making particularly good progress, both at school and at home. Although some are making only limited progress, all children are significantly safer than they were before moving to the home. They benefit from having a stable placement where staff support them in all aspects of their lives. One child has been discharged from the home since the last inspection. This was a planned move, necessary because the home could not meet her needs. The transition was well managed. The home worked collaboratively with the social worker, parent and new provider. This ensured that the child's emotional well-being was taken into account, she was well supported and the transition was successful. One child has been admitted to the home following a foster placement disruption because he was frequently missing. An impact risk assessment was completed and the child visited the home in advance of his admission. Although he presents no challenging behaviour within the home, his pattern of going missing continues and he is frequently absent without permission, including overnight. The home continues to encourage him to return and is working in partnership with the police and other professionals to promote his safety and well-being. For this individual, the home has not yet been able to influence any change. However, there has been an overall reduction in the number of incidents of children going missing. Staff welcome children home and speak to them about the reason they went missing, although children rarely comment on this. Children have the opportunity to have an independent return interview, but most decline or do not engage with the person appointed to this role. This makes it difficult for the home to fully assess why children go missing and put effective strategies in place to deter them. The provider has reviewed and improved its response to impact risk assessments that are carried out by the manager when a child is referred to the home. Consequently, the manager's assessment is given more credence and she has a greater say in who is admitted to the home. For example, her view that the home could not meet a child's needs was accepted following a recent impact risk	

assessment, and an alternative placement was found for that child.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about a child, the home works collaboratively with safeguarding, health and other relevant professionals and with the police. It takes prompt and effective action which protects the child and others from further harm. It seeks advice and guidance from relevant specialists when necessary to keep children safe. Risk assessments relating to other dangers are not always reviewed following serious safeguarding incidents. This does not ensure that full consideration is given to how best to protect a child. Nor does it provide staff with clear guidance that promotes a consistent and effective response to a safeguarding matter.

Behaviour management strategies have been effective in encouraging some children to engage with their education placements. Three children were rewarded for their efforts with a trip to the zoo over half term. Individual incentives are agreed with each child, but their effectiveness is variable. Some young people are not in employment, education or training, despite continuing encouragement and support from the home. This reduces their future life chances. The home works closely with the local authority careers advisers and arranges for young people who are disengaged to receive appropriate guidance and support. One young person is about to embark on a short course to improve her employability.

There is a new registered manager in the home. She effectively monitors children's progress through monthly reports, which she shares with the residential services manager. She continually reviews and takes steps to improve the quality of care provided. For example, she supports staff to develop individual incentive schemes for children to focus on helping them develop new skills and engage in education. She ensures that children's progress and welfare are central to team discussions and handover meetings. This helps the home to meet children's needs and promote their welfare.

Partnership working is good. The manager is presenting stronger challenge to other professionals, encouraging them to meet children's needs. She has invited those with specialist skills to play their part in improving children's experiences and outcomes. For example, she has invited the local authority participation officer to work with children in developing the new children's guide, and this work is about to commence. This demonstrates that the home is keen to ensure that the child's voice is central to practice within the home.

One member of staff has left and one has joined the team since the full inspection. Two more staff have been selected and recruitment checks on their suitability are well underway. This leaves two remaining vacancies, which are currently being covered by regular relief staff. Further gaps in the rota are currently covered by overtime and by the manager and deputy working some shifts. This enables the home to provide consistent care for children. The new staff team is beginning to gel and shows a strong commitment to the home. Staff are building positive, meaningful relationships with children and providing more consistent care. Children report that they are well looked after and that the staff are nice and care about them. They say that staff listen to them and they know who to approach with any

worries or concerns. There have been no complaints made.

The home has taken steps to address the requirements and recommendation made following the full inspection. It has reviewed the arrangements for children's use of wi-fi, removing unnecessary restrictions. This means that children have reasonable access to the internet during waking hours. Children report that they understand the new rules and are happy with them.

The lock on the small lounge has been changed so that the door can be kept unlocked during waking hours. This ensures that children can use this room freely and children confirmed that this is now the case. Routines have been established, which include staff unlocking doors to communal areas as soon as they get up in the morning. Children now have free access to the kitchen and other rooms until they go to bed. Any child returning late to the home is taken into the kitchen and given food and a drink.

No children have been restrained since the last inspection, so the home was unable to demonstrate how it is meeting the requirement to improve restraint records. Behaviour management records relating to sanctions are satisfactorily maintained, as long as both the log book and the record on the child's file are considered together. This shows that the home has taken steps to improve its records. The matter is therefore addressed as a recommendation and will be reviewed again at the next inspection.

The practice of locking all downstairs rooms at night continues. The home considers this necessary to protect children from the risk of intruders during the night. New risk assessments relating to this practice have been introduced for each child and have been shared with and signed by children and their social workers. Each risk assessment is identical. It shows that doors in the home will be locked 'to prevent unauthorised access to the premises and at night, as a reasonable security measure... but not as a method of control'. The risk assessments are not individually focused. They do not show that locking this door is a proportionate response to identified risks for a particular child. They do not consider whether waking night staff should be employed to meet the needs of any child who is likely to leave the home during the night or to want access to the kitchen.

The fire door at the top of the stairs continues to be locked at night. The manager has canvassed children's views and they all report that they feel safer having it locked. No written record of these meetings was made available for inspection, but those children spoken with told the inspector that they feel safe from the risk of intruders when the fire door is locked at night. The home does not consider this as a deprivation of children's liberty because children know how to override the door lock, which is an electronically operated magnet. The fire doors to the annex and to the porch door downstairs are also controlled by this system. When tested, the lock on the porch door did not unlock every time. The home reported the matter immediately, recognising that this undermines children's physical safety in the home. The inspector has reported the matter to the local fire safety officer. The impact of this shortfall on children has been minimal. The lock on the door to the annex is working effectively, so an alternative escape route is available in the event

of a fire. The fire safety alarms and procedures are tested each week and at the last test were fully operational.

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It can accommodate seven children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2016	Full	Good
16/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Outstanding
11/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, the 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
16: Statement of purpose Ensure that the statement of purpose includes a description of the accommodation including how it has been adapted to the needs of the children. In particular, include information showing how locking fire doors is used as a safeguarding measure at night. (Regulation 16, schedule 1(3)(a))	30/04/2017
25: Fire precautions Ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (a) and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. In particular, ensure that the release system on lockable fire doors is regularly tested and maintained in good functioning order. (Regulation 25(2)(b))	14/04/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that all decisions to limit a child's access to any part of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, which are intended to safeguard a child's welfare, are informed by a rigorous assessment of that child's individual needs, are properly recorded and are kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- Ensure that records of restraint enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly when any issues or trends of concern emerge. This particularly relates to ensuring that restraint records meet the requirements of Regulation 35. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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