

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18/02/2013
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/11/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides short-term breaks for seven young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. In addition, two children are able to live at the home. The home is owned and managed by the local authority.

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.

Progress

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

This interim inspection focused on the progress made since the last visit. The inspection also looked at whether the children's home is maintaining or improving the standard of care. At the last full inspection in November 2012 the home was judged as good with some outstanding features.

Managers have ensured they have made good progress in meeting the three recommendations made at the last inspection. Records of checks for external agency staff working at the home now include photographs of the individual. This has enhanced the safety of young people and protects them from unsuitable people having access to them. Secondly, the home sends reports from visitors carrying out monitoring visits on behalf of the provider to Ofsted in a timely way. The reports provide a succinct analysis of the conduct of the home and the quality of care provided. Finally, managers have provided a copy of the revised Statement of Purpose to Ofsted. This improves knowledge and understanding of the services offered by the home.

Young people appear safe and happy in the home and there are sufficient staff to ensure their immediate needs are met; overall they are provided with consistent care. Agency staff are used to maintain safe staffing ratios. In most cases, managers take care to foster a continuity of approach by using agency staff that are familiar with the home and know young people well. The environment is spacious and provides specialised and adapted equipment to support the individual needs of young people. It is split into three discrete living areas to enable small groups of children, who have similar needs, to spend time at the home.

Managers work hard to improve consultation with young people and parents. Those families who use the short-breaks service are complimentary about the home and the care and support offered by staff. When parents raise concerns managers respond to remedy any shortfall identified to improve the quality of the care experience for young people. Independent advocates help to facilitate regular meetings with young people. Managers have been creative in developing the structure and content of consultation so that young people with limited verbal communication are able to express their views and wishes. For example, young people visited a leisure centre to improve their knowledge of opportunities for exercise in order to make choices that are more informed.

However, significant shortfalls found at this inspection relate to care planning and review for some young people who live at the home. This has resulted in an overall judgement of inadequate progress.

In particular, there is a lack of clear and detailed plans for children who live at the home, including absence of local authority placement plans and minutes of any review. Furthermore, there is no evidence that staff at the home participate in multi-disciplinary planning and review. This contravenes statutory requirements for records for looked after children and impairs the ability of staff to support the needs of young people so as to promote their progress.

Additionally, keyworkers do not maintain up-to-date internal plans of care for children who are placed in an emergency or change their placement status from short-break users to living at the home. Managers' analysis of children's experience of living at the home is further limited, due to recording systems that focus on the short-breaks service. Because the home does not differentiate planning needs for differing placement option staff do not recognise the importance of longer-term education and health planning, consistency of care, transition planning or clear contact arrangements. For example, staff have temporarily moved children out of their bedrooms to accommodate the needs of others on short breaks. Risk assessments do not provide sufficient information to enable staff to respond effectively to maintain restrictions on contact arrangements. This means staff do not provide vulnerable young people with care that consistently meets their needs and supports their development.

Similarly, young people who are ready to move to adult provision do not have clear and effective plans to support their transition from the home. Staff are not involved

in plans to prepare young people to move to supported living accommodation despite proposed timeframes of less than two months. This means that staff do not contribute to any pathway plan which prevents them from sharing their knowledge and understanding of young people with complex needs to ensure transitions are successful.

Monitoring by the Registered Manager is not robust enough to identify the shortfalls highlighted by this inspection. Additionally, visitors on behalf of the Provider complete reports that raise concerns about the impact of emergency placements on children who have short breaks at the home, particularly cancellation of booked visits and disruption to their experience. The registered person has failed to respond to address the concerns raised. This means that both children who live at the home and children who visit the home for short breaks experience confusion about, and disruption to, their expectations about their time at the home.

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
12A (2001)	ensure the registered person co-operates with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement (Regulation 12A (1))	12/04/2013
28 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall maintain a record in permanent form which includes information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to each child accommodated (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	12/04/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6, and improving the quality of care provided, in particular, the placement plans for each child (Regulation 34 (1) (a)(b))	12/04/2013
15 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall promote the contact of each child with his parents, friends and relatives in accordance with the arrangements set out in his placement plan (Regulation 15 (1)(a))	29/03/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home liaises with the child's responsible authority and their

Independent Reviewing Officer where applicable, about the progress of the child's readiness to move to any future accommodation (NMS 12.3)

- ensure the home supports the young person's transition to adult services, when required by the care plan (NMS 12.4)
- ensure a review is initiated no more than 72 hours after any emergency admission to consider whether the child should remain at the home, or it is in that child's best interests to move to a different placement (NMS 11.7)
- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that visitors on behalf of the registered provider raise with them (NMS 21.9)
- ensure each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- ensure the home contacts placing authorities, to request reviews, if any change in the care plan is needed, if there has been a significant change in the arrangements for the child's care, or if a major action such as a placement change from short breaks to living at the home occurs. (NMS 25.5)

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*.