

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061810
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Cumbria County Council
Registered person address	Organisational Development The Courts, English Street CARLISLE CA3 8NA
Responsible individual	Lynette Marjorie Burns
Registered manager	Hilary Southward
Date of last inspection	03/02/2014

Inspection date	24/06/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home was judged to have made inadequate progress at the last inspection. However, improvements have been swiftly implemented to address the concerns raised. As a result, young people now live in a home where the overall effectiveness and impact on young people are judged to be adequate.

A core team of staff is committed, child-focused and has sound quality of care practices. This is enabling young people to make some progress. As a result, some young people's behaviour is more settled, the majority are making good educational progress, and they are gaining more independence and life skills in preparation for leaving care. Young people are positive about the care they receive at the home.

Care planning and care practice are individualised to meet young people's specific needs. In the main, staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and relevant professionals to ensure they get the right help, guidance and advice they need. Young people's views are pursued to assist in the running of the home and they are involved in decisions affecting their lives.

Safeguarding practice is improved and young people say they feel safe. Sound systems and effective care practice ensure the welfare and safety of young people are promoted. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the risks

young people face and always take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed. This means young people's safety is promoted.

The leadership and management of the children's home are built on sound foundations. The manager, along with the staff team, has addressed the shortfalls found on the last inspection in February 2014. Although the local authority has made improvement to the deficiencies in the staffing complement, these arrangements are temporary. The recruitment process has not been fast tracked to address the staff vacancies and long-term sickness. This is having a negative impact on the overall standard of care delivered to young people at the home. As a result, this is affecting the ability to provide continued consistency of care and the building of sustained relationships to ensure all young people trust those adults who care for them, enabling them to work with them more positively.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
18/10/2013	Full	adequate
18/02/2013	Interim	good progress
22/10/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- develop skills and emotional resilience that will prepare young people for independent living (NMS 2.6)
- ensure care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing(NMS 5.1)
- ensure written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail act taken by staff (NMS 5.10)
- ensure children who are able and wish to keep and take medication, can do so safely (NMS 6.14)
- ensure the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure contingency plans are in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels (NMS 17.3)

- ensure suitable arrangements exist for professional supervision of the registered person. (NMS 19.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people are encouraged to develop their own identity and a positive self-view through individualised care planning and are making suitable progress. Most young people engage with key staff members. This helps young people gain a good understanding of their background. Some young people are still on the journey to achieve this. Staff are committed and persevering in attaining positive attachments with young people. This supports appropriate relationships to ensure staff promote the young people's identity, and encourage social and emotional development.

Young people live in an environment that promotes their health and emotional well-being overall. They are supported to develop healthy lifestyles and this includes young people attending routine health appointments. This has brought about some improved health outcomes for young people. Staff have an understanding of young people's specific health needs. Young people continue to benefit from open and honest discussions with staff about the detrimental effect of smoking, drinking and drugs. Staff respond appropriately, offer sound support and monitor health issues. Some young people display symptoms associated with mental health. Access to specialised mental health services, for example child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), is limited due to lack of resources in the town. This was not considered prior to the young people moving into the home and as a result young people's anxieties continue to impact on their lives.

Education is recognised as highly important in the home. Staff understand that this will improve the life chances for young people. Staff work tirelessly to ensure that young people attend their education provision. Where barriers exist within education, staff work closely with professionals to address these. Young people have access to suitable facilities, including a computer, to undertake their homework. This approach and commitment have brought a tremendous improvement in school attendance and attainment for the majority of young people from their starting points. This will have a positive impact on available opportunities in further education and in their life chances as adults. Staff continue to persevere to engage young people where they struggle to attend their education provision, to bring improved outcomes. Most young people understand the importance of a good education and show learning potential.

Young people have positive and meaningful contact with family, friends and significant others. This promotes their identity needs and sense of belonging. A young person said: 'I see my nana and granddad every week.' Staff understand the benefits of contact and build positive relationships with parents and others. Where young people have limited contact with their family, the provision of independent visitors has been pursued. This ensures young people have important links with family and significant others that provide them with positive support networks.

Young people are adequately supported by staff to practise independence skills, including domestic tasks, cooking and managing money, appropriate to their age and understanding. Young people are at the start of this journey, which will assist in preparing them for leaving care and being able to look after themselves. A young person said: 'I do some cooking and chores; I keep my bedroom clean and tidy and do my own laundry.' Young people who are over 16 years old have a pathway plan. The plan includes suitable detail to support the young person. In one case this is starting to prepare the young person for a forthcoming move to live independently. Other individuals still need help to acquire a number of life and independence skills to ensure they can care for themselves successfully.

Quality of care

adequate

The home provides an encouraging environment for young people. Relationships have formed or are forming between staff and young people. This enables staff to work more effectively in a relaxed manner while still maintaining consistent professional boundaries. The staff team demonstrates a good understanding of young people's individual personalities, needs, interests and strengths. A young person said: 'It's okay here, it's more settled, I get on with most of the staff.'

The permanent staff team takes responsibility for supporting the young people, and regular team meetings include discussions about all the issues pertinent to the young people to support their continuity of care. Young people can read their files, which helps them understand their histories and plans, and they can attend their statutory reviews. Placement plans have all been reviewed and updated; these outline the young people's individual needs and show the journey of the young person. Placements plans provide suitable guidance for staff on how young people should be cared for. Improvement has occurred in undertaking regular direct work sessions with young people. This enables young people and staff to explore and address relevant care needs.

Staff recognise the importance of promoting positive behaviour and that this is essential to the quality of care that they provide. Positive behaviour is being consistently rewarded. The staff team is striving to manage negative behaviour through building positive relationships and ensuring that consistent boundaries are maintained with young people. Staff are clear on the individual behaviour strategies that are in place for each young person. Some young people have commenced a period of negative behaviour and there has been a noticeable increase in incidents of young people going missing and risk-taking behaviour. This has resulted in the Registered Manager calling multi-agency strategy meetings to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to try and protect the young people.

Young people influence decision-making through a range of avenues. Daily discussions, house meetings, key-work sessions and statutory reviews provide an opportunity to express their opinions. Young people know how to complain. No

complaints have been made since the last inspection.

There are sound arrangements to manage medication in the home and make sure it is safely administered. However when young people self-medicate the oversight of this is weak. For example visual checks on medication form part of the risk assessment, however as the key worker had been absent from work no contingency had been put in place. As a result it was unclear if the young people had been taking medication as prescribed. Health arrangements are reasonable, as staff make sure young people are registered for health services and receive appointments. Access to services such as CAMHS is limited. Young people sometimes refuse to engage with health services or attend medical appointments. Staff do persist in encouraging them to do so and point out the benefits.

Young people live in a well-maintained property, which is close to local shops and the beach. The home provides a modern comfortable environment for young people. Staff have worked tirelessly to improve the environment in recent months. Young people have their own bedrooms, which they can personalise to reflect their individuality. This ensures young people are living in a pleasant home with good facilities to meet their needs.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people's safety and welfare are well integrated into care practices and taken seriously by the home. Staff have regular discussions with young people and talk through any identified safety or other concerns. Most young people engage and take on board safety matters which assist in them keeping themselves safer. Staff receive safeguarding training and have a good understanding of their duties in promoting young people's welfare. All risk areas are assessed. Young people have detailed risk assessments to manage identified risks. These have been reviewed and updated. As a result, risk assessments adequately detail the precautions to take to enable staff to help keep young people or others safe.

Personalised behaviour plans are used. They contain individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. These have been reviewed and are assisting staff in reducing young people's challenging behaviour. Staff demonstrate that they know young people well and the strategies to manage behaviour are more successful. Staff engage positively and sensitively with young people to recognise and support them in working through their anxieties. Young people have positive incentives to encourage them to behave in a socially acceptable way. Sanctions are appropriately used, proportionate to young people's age and understanding. Staff and young people confirm that physical intervention is only used as a very last resort and that young people's behaviour is managed in a calm and supportive manner. There have been very few physical interventions used since the last inspection. Relevant records include all the required information. This ensures that sufficient information is maintained to assist in the monitoring of these practices to protect

young people.

Staff follow anti-bullying policies and procedures. Staff challenge any bullying behaviour and speak to all young people involved individually, to try to stop this happening. Recently a staff member has been designated as the anti-bullying officer. Additional work is being undertaken on bullying with the young people. As a result, young people's views on this matter have changed since the last inspection. Young people say that there is no bullying at the home. Staff continue to monitor this area closely. This is to ensure young people do not experience bullying which affects their daily life negatively, reducing their self-esteem. This makes them feel safe and secure within their own home.

Safe recruitment checks are undertaken before relief staff commence working at the home. The home has access to the disclosure check, identification information, references, employment history, training and experience for all workers working in the home. This is to prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people and ensures their well-being and safety.

Staff follow and implement suitable protocols when a child goes missing. Staff take appropriate action, including liaising with the police and discussing with young people the risk involved when staying out late at night, however this is not always recorded well. The action taken is aimed to reduce such events and safeguard young people's welfare. The majority of incidents are where young people are reported missing and result in late returns home, but others are young people going missing for over 24 hours. These incidents are not reducing.

Young people live in a physically safe environment in which health and safety issues are suitably managed to protect them. Staff undertake routine health and safety checks around the home. Fire safety risk assessments and regular safety checks protect young people from fire. Routine evacuation procedures and practices ensure that young people have awareness of what to do in the event of an emergency and staff know how to protect them.

Leadership and management

adequate

Suitable leadership and management are demonstrated within the home. The Registered Manager has been in post since 2008 and has suitable qualifications and experience. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service and is committed to meeting the needs of the young people.

The shortfalls found at the last inspection in February 2014 have been addressed. Action has been taken to address the two requirements around protecting young people from significant harm. These include staff that are adequately trained to meet the needs of young people, particularly in safeguarding procedures, ensuring that suitable staff care for young people.

Significant events, such as allegations made about people working at the home, child protection enquiries and serious incidents necessitating calling the police to the home, have been consistently notified to Ofsted, as required. These concerns have been investigated, although not always in a timely manner, and have now been suitably concluded. This demonstrates that the home is implementing safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that matters have been appropriately addressed.

The permanent staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare matters. An on-going programme of regular refresher training is provided. As a result, this ensures the staff can consistently deliver a suitable and safe standard of care to young people.

Staff say they are well supported and confirm that the management team is approachable. All staff benefit from receiving regular formal supervision. This consistently provides suitable support to all staff to access continuing advice and guidance in relation to their care of young people. However the Registered Manager has not had supervision regularly, a shortfall also reported by the Regulation 33 visitor.

Monitoring of the home is suitable. There are regular announced visits from the independent agency to monitor the quality of care and monitoring is also undertaken by the manager. The monitoring systems of the service are starting to be more evaluative but this is work in progress. Since the last inspection a review of the monitoring system has taken place. Timings of the visits are currently a month behind, for example a visit undertaken on 30 May 2014 looked at the month of April. As a result current and live issues that the home and new young people were presenting were not monitored. This delay could result in shortfalls not being picked up and young people not being protected.

The local authority has taken some action to improve and provide suitable staffing arrangements in the home, but has not taken immediate action to recruit staff to vacancies or to cover periods of sickness or absenteeism. Although there is a core of permanent staff, this does not yet fully ensure a stable staff team is in place. Therefore, this does not enable all young people to build strong attachments and trusting relationships, or provide a secure environment in which they can fully thrive.

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.