

Children's Home - Monitoring visit

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Inspector	Julia Wright Pete Hylton

This monitoring visit.

This monitoring visit took place following concerns raised with Ofsted. Concerns centred upon the increased absence of one young person from the home, and the effectiveness of staff at the home, and others, to protect her.

The home is without a registered manager and the responsible individual remains in day to day charge of the home. An application for the registered manager position has been made to Ofsted.

One young person has chosen to spend increasing periods of time away from the home. These periods have increased from October 2016 to December 2016, culminating in her being away from the home for 14 days in November and 21 days in December. The young person returned to the home in January following an incident in the community.

The placing authority was aware that the young person was staying at an address in the community. The monitoring visit found that an agreement had been reached with the placing authority whereby staff would visit the young person daily, increasing to twice daily, at the known address. It was also agreed that the staff team would remain in touch with her by text message on her mobile telephone. There are no formal minutes about how these arrangements were reached between the local authority and the home. This included no written guidance from the local authority about what staff should do if the young person is not at the address or failed to answer the door. However, internal arrangements were made by managers at the home. Directions for staff about their visits to the young person were recorded in team meeting minutes, including the frequency of staff visits to the young person at the known address, the timing of such visits, and staff were reminded to see the young person at the property, not outside. Managers also told staff to report the young person as being absent to the police, if they did not see her, in line with their protocol. These missing episodes were recorded as unauthorised absences by the police, as her whereabouts were known.

Managers and staff have tried to work with the young person. This has extended to offering her help including securing support from external agencies in an effort to inform her about risks she faced, and options available to her to improve her safety. However, managers and staff lacked professional curiosity about the situation the young person found herself in. For example, reports noted that, on occasions, the staff have smelt cannabis at the property when she stays. Managers and staff expressed concern about the young person's safety, her disengagement from staff, her losing weight, her increased absences, her relationship with the person she was staying with, and her expressed wish for her life to remain as it is. However, these patterns have not been analysed with reference to her vulnerability, and concerns escalated to senior managers within the local authority to fully assess and understand risks she faced.

Risk assessment documents within the home lacked oversight. For example a sexual exploitation screening tool completed prior to the young person's admission, has not been updated during her stay at the home, as managers concluded that the home's risk assessment does not include details of the risk of sexual exploitation despite this being an issue in the past. These omissions indicate that managers and staff have not taken all information into account when considering the young person's safety, or the steps they needed to take to protect her.

Managers acknowledged feeling frustrated about the young person's situation, her age and wish for independence, and their difficulty facilitating change in order to protect her. Managers at the home had raised concerns with the placing authority, but had not escalated these concerns to senior managers within the local authority when the response was slow or not to their satisfaction. This has resulted in a lack of action to protect the safety and welfare of the young person.

Information about this children's home

The home is one of three homes within a privately run organisation. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, 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
The registered person must, and must ensure that staff - (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a) (b) (c) (d)).	10/02/2017
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure – (a) that staff (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to	10/02/2017

the child; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare	
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Recommendations

None

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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