

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	11/03/2013
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	05/07/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and one of a number of children's services operated by the provider. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

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**.

At the previous inspection on 5 July 2012 this service was adjudged to have a good overall effectiveness. Since that time progress has not been made, and both outcomes for, and safeguarding of, young people are now of concern.

There is currently no Registered Manager in post. The interim management arrangements do not provide consistency or direction to staff and young people. Managers from other homes take it in turns to oversee the daily running of the home.

There is some skilled work being undertaken and young people make good progress in their educational attendance and attainment. However, overall the behaviour of young people is not being well managed. On several occasions police have been called to respond to incidents of challenging behaviour. Serious damage to property within the home and within the local neighbourhood has been caused. These incidents are similar to previous incidents despite there being a change in the young people accommodated. This is a cycle that the home has been unable to reverse,

indicating a lack of robust pre-admission assessment.

There are a significant number of occasions when the staff on duty includes only one member of staff who has been restraint trained. This leaves both staff and young people in a vulnerable position should physical restraint be necessary. While there is one member of staff on duty who has completed their probationary period, there are occasions when the most senior member of staff is one who does not have a formal qualification. Shifts are therefore not always staffed by people who have the skills and qualifications to manage the needs of the young people accommodated.

There are serious shortfalls in record-keeping. No entries have been recorded in the central record of physical restraints since the end of December 2012. There have been physical restraints during this period which are recorded in the incident record and on children's files but not in the central log. This is a breach of regulations and has the potential to impact on the quality assurance monitoring process. Additionally one child's file could not be located during this visit which raises concerns about the arrangements for storage of sensitive information and represents a potential breach in privacy and confidentiality of the young person concerned. The file has subsequently been located and had been safely archived.

Further breaches of regulation are apparent with sanctions not always being recorded in the central record of sanctions even though pocket money records show reparation has been made. Furthermore, sanctions are not always relevant to the misdemeanour committed, for example loss of a day's paid activity for breaking a mug or swearing. Loss of activities is the main sanction incurred. This is counter-productive and raises levels of frustration in young people.

Frustration levels in young people are also raised by the location of the staff office which keeps staff too far removed from young people.

Pocket money records are not accurate which means young people's money is not safely managed, which may be a frustration for them.

The night-time supervision arrangements have, on several occasions been insufficient to safeguard the welfare of young people. The most recent of these was a young person leaving the building in the early hours of the morning. This was despite staff being alerted to the probability that an incident was likely to arise. Furthermore the alarm system, which is intended to alert staff when young people leave their rooms, is not tamper-proof and is regularly disabled by young people. This allows them to leave the premises or go into each-others bedrooms without being detected. The home does not routinely use waking night staff. This places young people at risk.

Some disclosures made by young people have not been referred to the LADO or area team manager of the local social services but have been discussed with placing social workers instead. This does not promote the safety of young people and prevents the local social services department from taking action in respect of potential child sexual exploitation issues.

Placement plans for young people and daily summaries identify known behaviours, such as smoking illegal substances, but do not highlight the actions that are to be taken to address these. It is therefore not clear whether children receive the care and support they require.

Despite a strong commitment to maintenance and servicing of equipment, areas of the house, such as the kitchen and sitting room, were cold and some of the heating was not working. A thermostat on the radiator in the sitting room was broken and had been for a while despite having been reported. Staff were not clear about the reason for this.

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
7 (2001)	appoint an individual to manage the children's home and ensure interim management arrangements are robust and provide consistency and direction (Regulation 7 (1)(a))	22/04/2013
11 (2001)	make proper provision for the care and supervision of children accommodated; in particular ensure night-time supervision arrangements keep children safe (Regulation 11 (b)) *	22/04/2013
16 (2001)	implement the home's safeguarding policy, in particular ensure that all allegations are reported to the LADO in the area in which the home is situated and in particular that any information obtained following an initial referral is also reported (Reg 16 (1)(b))	22/04/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include points a-i of this regulation (Regulation 17B (3) (a-i))	22/04/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that sanctions are effective and appropriate to the misdemeanour committed (Regulation 17B (3) (f))	22/04/2013
22 (2001)	ensure that where the use of electronic surveillance has been agreed in accordance with this regulation that it is in good working order and tamper-proof (Regulation 22 (1))	22/04/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the size of the children's home, the Statement of Purpose, and the number and needs of any children accommodated there; and the need to safeguard the health and welfare of children accommodated in the home; a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced person's working at the	22/04/2013

	children's home (Regulation 25 (1)(a)(b)) *	
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept reasonably maintained. In particular ensure the heating is in good working order. (Regulation 31 (2)(e))	22/04/2013

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice

Recommendations

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

- ensure that placement plans set out children's individual needs, taking into account where appropriate their relationship with the wider group of children and ensure that staff meet children's individual needs as set out (NMS 2.1)
- ensure children receive a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding and in particular that accurate records of this are maintained (NMS 2.7)
- ensure the home's approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily (NMS 3.22)
- ensure staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques (NMS 3.15)
- ensure the home's design promotes children's health, safety and well-being; in particular review the suitability of the office (NMS10.2)
- provide admission only to children whose assessed needs the home can reasonably expect to meet. (NMS 11.2)

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*.