

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20/02/2014
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/07/2013
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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 **satisfactory progress**.

The last full inspection of the home took place in July 2013 and at that time the overall effectiveness of the home was judged as being good. In the interim period since the last inspection, the home has shown the capacity to improve and has been judged as making satisfactory progress.

The Registered Manager provides extremely strong leadership and management of the home. The recommendations made following the previous inspection have mostly been met in full. Staff have either received full or refresher training in the home's agreed methods of physical restraint and only these approved methods have been used during any subsequent physical restraint. The fire records are now updated to show the action taken following any deficiencies noted during routine checking. The Registered Manager has communicated regularly with the police liaison officer and has forwarded a policy regarding police involvement in the home to her for approval. A response is awaited. Young people's files provide a more complete account of their time in the home a copy of any e-mail correspondence is now placed on their files.

In addition, the home has made further improvements. A new kitchen has been installed which has improved the facilities available to young people. The home's safeguarding procedure has been submitted to the local authority designated officer (LADO) for approval and amendments made in line with those suggested. A new, sturdier front door makes for a more welcoming arrival at the home. A new electronic recording system for monitoring patterns and trends in some of the homes records, such as those of sanctions and physical restraint, is currently being trialled but is not yet fully tested for effectiveness.

The organisation is aware of recent changes in the Children's Homes Regulations and has taken action to meet these. For instance, the local authority are now informed when young people are admitted and discharged from the home and policies and procedures are in the process of being updated. The home is also addressing changes in regulations due to take effect⁶ from April 2014, such as an independent visitor has been appointed to monitor the conduct of the home in line with Regulation 33.

While not without incident, most young people make good personal progress, compared to their starting points, and some make exceptional personal progress in a number of areas. A social worker said, 'there has been a complete turnaround in the behaviour of my young person, it is truly amazing. He has gone from being one of the highest profile young people in the county to a normal adolescent.'

The progress young people make in respect to educational attendance varies. While some settle into the home quickly and maintain good educational attendance, attendance for others is sporadic; though some now express the intention to engage more fully now that they are more settled.

Despite some incidents where police have been called to the home in response to young people's violent or criminal behaviour, the frequency is far less than in previous placements. Staff do not want to criminalise the behaviour of young people and decisions regarding the pressing of charges are made in conjunction with representatives of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and placing social workers; this represents good multi-agency working; promotes the interests of young people and ensures that actions taken are consistent with the plans of other agencies.

Young people said, 'I like it here, the staff are reliable- they do what they say they will. This means I don't get frustrated.' In responding to a home's quality assurance survey, the police liaison officer says, 'I think the home's use of sanctions, rather than always calling out police, is good and balanced. We also have regular check-ups to keep informed of any changes in residents.'

Since the previous inspection, some young people made a planned and positive transition to new placements in line with the plans agreed with the placing authorities on admission to the home. The home has issued notice on one placement since the previous inspection; which was appropriate given the risks posed to others and based on the information that was known at the time. The young person was well supported during this notice period outside of the children's home environment;

which enabled a planned move to take place.

Incident reporting is thorough in most respects. However, not all reports include the duration of the event or details of the critical analysis and follow-up action that happens in practice. The full impact of the incident on young people cannot therefore be fully assessed or whether staff intervened quickly enough; which is crucial given the big difference in age range of the young people sometimes involved.

Robust action is taken in response to poor practice by individuals although this has not been without impact on young people, staff and the home's staffing arrangements. Well organised records show that concerns raised by young people are addressed thoroughly and where necessary reported to the local authority designated officer (LADO) and to the DBS.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is written guidance and a procedure for staff to follow on police involvement in the home, which have been agreed with the local police. In particular prompt the police to comment on the policy that has been submitted (NMS 3.22)
- ensure that reports completed in line with regulation 34 comment on any concerns about specific incidents and any patterns and trends noted alongside any action taken (NMS 21.2)
- ensure records are up to date. In particular ensure that incident reports include the duration of the event and details of any follow up action taken. Also that duty rosters include the full names of staff , the hours worked and identify whether an agency or permanent member of staff. (NMS 22)

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*.