

## **Children's homes – Interim inspection**

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| <b>Inspection date</b>         | <b>02/03/2017</b>      |
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | <b>SC063683</b>        |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | <b>Interim</b>         |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | <b>Children's home</b> |
| <b>Registered manager</b>      | <b>Michael Booth</b>   |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | <b>Sharon Lloyd</b>    |

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| <b>Inspection date</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>02/03/2017</b> |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Good</b>       |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>None</b>       |
| <b>This inspection</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |
| <p><b>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</b></p> <p>This home was judged <b>good</b> at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has <b>declined in effectiveness</b>.</p> <p>The local authority has reviewed its residential provision and agreed changes to the management of the home that have not yet been implemented. The manager has not completed the six-monthly review of the home that was due at the end of November 2016. This does not ensure that the home's development plan takes into account matters that have arisen and the quality of care provided during that review period. The home's development plan has been on hold temporarily, awaiting the arrival of a new manager.</p> <p>No action plan addressing the two requirements from the last inspection was submitted to Ofsted, and both are repeated. The home has not provided evidence that staff files have been brought up to standard or that the home is operating in accordance with recommendations made in the fire officer's report of 2016. Neither have two of the recommendations been met, so the opportunity to drive improvement has been missed.</p> <p>The manager is currently managing two homes. This means that he has not been in full-time day-to-day control of the home for over six weeks. Although a temporary arrangement, this is having a negative impact on the home in that there have been delays in setting up a staff meeting, and the manager is relying heavily on assistance from the newly appointed deputy. Although the manager maintains a good overview of the home, he is not able to progress changes and address issues as quickly as he would like.</p> <p>A reorganisation of children's residential services has resulted in significant changes to the staff team. Of the 13 care staff currently working at the home, only four were employed at the home at the time of the full inspection. An additional one will shortly be returning to the home. Eight care staff have joined the home between October and December 2016. They have previously worked in other children's homes run by the provider. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced. They have been through a stringent recruitment process and are deemed by the provider to have the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the statement of purpose. Staff files were not checked at this inspection and, since no action plan has been received to show that a requirement to improve the information held in</p> |                   |

relation to staff suitability has been met, the requirement is repeated.

The new staff team is beginning to gel, but there have been no team meetings in the past two months. This makes it hard for staff to develop an understanding of the way that the home works or to explore and agree behaviour management strategies for use with particular children. Individual staff supervision takes place every six weeks. This does not support managers to ensure that staff who are new to the home are developing effective relationships with children and using appropriate interventions to manage their behaviour.

The high turnover of staff and children between October 2016 and January 2017 has meant that some of the previously strong relationships between staff and children have been severed, and the new staff members have not yet established strong and influential relationships with the current group of children. Most of the children said they are not happy at the home and spoke negatively about it, although they both recognise that staff care about them and say that they feel safe at the home.

For the most part, the current group of children are reluctant to engage with staff in the activities offered. The home offers unpaid activities freely, and provides paid activities based on children's positive behaviour, such as their engagement in education. As the current group of children have low levels of engagement with education, opportunities for them to have enjoyable experiences with staff, such as go-karting or cinema trips, are reduced. This makes it more difficult for staff to develop a positive rapport and influential relationships with children.

Four children have been admitted to the home since the last inspection. The quality of transition planning has been mixed. Three children were admitted within a very short time-frame, without full consideration of their impact on those already living at the home. This did not allow sufficient time for the home to come to know each child and respond appropriately to their needs before another child was admitted.

A recommendation has not been met to use impact risk assessments as a basis for ensuring that the home accepts only children whose assessed needs it can meet. Although written compatibility risk assessments were not conducted, each child's suitability for the home was discussed with and agreed by senior staff and managers. The home identified concerns about the possible negative impact of one child on the others, but the manager considered that this was manageable.

In some instances, the home has been compelled to take children for whom no alternative placements could be found. Although, initially, these placements were deemed to be short term, children have remained at the home for longer than anticipated, despite a lack of good progress.

The manager advocates on behalf of children. At times, he challenges those with responsibility for care planning. Delays in securing appropriate placements for some children mean that they remain at the home when this is not always in their

best interests. The home demonstrates commitment to these children, providing stability and a safe environment. Good partnership working ensures a multi-agency approach to care planning and safeguarding.

It is clear that children with a history of criminality and drug misuse have negatively influenced other children, such that their progress has faltered. For example, a child who had made very good progress at school at the point of the last inspection has, disappointingly, not progressed with his chosen apprenticeship but opted out of education, training or employment. He has become increasingly involved in anti-social behaviour. This reduces his chances of a successful working life and does not prepare him well for future independence. The home continues to work with other agencies to offer him alternative opportunities and, latterly, he has begun to reflect on his current lifestyle, reduce his challenging behaviour, and review his attitude to learning and work.

Several children have been drawn into criminal activity which has resulted in police charges. This includes theft of items in the community, theft of electronic devices from the children's home and assaults on staff. In most cases, children have stolen items to fund their drug habit, and some have sold their Christmas presents for the same. The home encourages children to engage appropriately with the criminal justice service and to participate in programmes set by the youth offending service. This helps children to understand the consequences of anti-social behaviour and accept responsibility for their actions.

Most of the children misuse cannabis and, for some, this practice has escalated while they have been living at this home. Although staff know that children are spending their money on cannabis, they feel helpless to prevent this. When children smoke cigarettes or cannabis on the premises, staff tell them to go off site. This does not give an unequivocal message that this behaviour is not acceptable. No specialist drugs workers have been invited to the home. Staff report that this is because children will not engage with them.

Most children who have been admitted to the home have a history of poor engagement with education. Setting up appropriate education can be a lengthy process, so some children have missed extensive schooling. Others of over compulsory school age are not in education, employment or training. The home liaises with the virtual school and education providers to help children to access education that meets their needs. In some cases, visiting teachers attend the home to provide individual tuition to children. However, despite encouragement and incentives from staff, some children remain reluctant to engage with their teachers, and stay in bed. Very recent improvements are apparent, in that two children have attended education for a few days, but this improvement cannot yet be seen as sustained.

Children's missing behaviour is of concern. Some children spend much time away from the home, and some are frequently reported missing because they fail to return at agreed times. Staff do not know where they are or with whom. In some

cases, staff suspect that they are with family, but there are concerns that other children may be mixing with unsuitable people who are a risk to their safety. In line with the home's good safeguarding procedures, whenever possible staff go looking for children and encourage them to return, but this is dependent on staffing levels and the needs of the other children. The home appropriately shares its concerns with relevant partners, and contributes appropriately to care planning and safeguarding strategy meetings.

Although children are welcomed back and given the opportunity to speak to staff as well as an independent person about why they were missing, most children are secretive about their whereabouts. Their relationships with staff are not yet sufficiently strong to enable them to speak openly.

Children have the opportunity to comment on the care that they receive and to contribute to day-to-day planning through monthly children's meetings and frequent key-worker sessions. Staff encourage them to take an active role in their own care planning, so that children are fully involved in decisions made about their lives. The current system to monitor, review and evaluate feedback from children is not well developed. A recommendation to improve this, so that children's views can be taken into account in the development and improvement of the service, has not yet been addressed.

Four children have left the home since the last inspection. One child had a traumatic transition to a secure placement because of the risks to his safety as a result of being frequently missing. The manager and staff team had worked tirelessly with other agencies and the child's family to protect the child, dissuade him from going missing and promote his safety. Despite their interventions, the child had become increasingly engaged in dangerous behaviour, necessitating a transition to a secure children's home by means of a secure escort. The child was angry at the way that the transfer was managed, and the manager acknowledges that the home has learned lessons about how to support children in such a situation better in the future.

A child's planned transition to another children's home was brought forward when that child refused to return to the home following a visit to the new placement. The home properly investigated an allegation that the child had made against his peers at the home, but the evidence was unreliable and the allegation not proven. Six members of staff attended a transition party hosted by the child's new home. This was a successful event, and the child was pleased that staff showed care and commitment to him.

One child moved on successfully to a supported living placement. He had made some good progress at the home through attending and engaging in education. He developed his budgeting and independence skills prior to the move. He moved quickly once the new placement was identified, as he was eager to leave the home.

The fourth child to have left moved successfully to another children's home.

Despite an established pattern of failing to engage in education prior to his admission to this home, the child was successful in achieving a qualification in climbing. Staff supported him to overcome his anxieties, and helped him to develop confidence and self-esteem.

There has been an improvement in the independent, monthly reports on the quality of the home. The independent visitor routinely assesses how well the home is safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The visitor has raised no concerns about the home's safeguarding practice. Any shortfalls reported are addressed by the manager before the next visit.

The current registered manager recognises that steps to introduce changes and improvements must now be taken. For example, he has recently arranged for CoramVoice to visit regularly and advocate on behalf of children. He has initiated negotiations with the child and adolescent mental health service regarding the provision of advice and guidance to the staff team.

## Information about this children's home

This is a local authority-run home that accommodates up to six young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 17/08/2016      | Full            | Good                    |
| 30/03/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 20/01/2016      | Full            | Good                    |
| 06/03/2015      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness  |

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

### 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 (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   |
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| <p>25: Fire precautions</p> <p>(2) The regulatory reform fire safety order applies to the home:<br/>(b) the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that order and any regulations made under it, especially directives from the local fire safety officer, are complied with in respect of the home.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 25/04/2017 |
| <p>32: Fitness of workers</p> <p>(1) The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>(2) The registered person may only:<br/>(a) employ an individual to work at the children's home; or<br/>(b) if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>(3) The requirements are that:<br/>(d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in schedule 2.</p> <p>(7) The registered person may permit an individual to start work at the home, despite the fact that the requirement in paragraph (3)(d) has not been met, if:<br/>(a) the registered person has taken all reasonable steps to obtain full information about each of the matters in schedule 2 in respect of the individual, but the enquiries in relation to any of the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of schedule 2 are incomplete;<br/>(b) full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of schedule 2;<br/>(c) the registered person considers that the circumstances are</p> | 30/04/2017 |

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| <p>exceptional; and</p> <p>(d) the registered person ensures that the individual is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties, pending receipt of any outstanding information on the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of schedule 2, which is then considered satisfactory by the registered person.</p> |  |
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## Recommendations

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

- Use impact risk assessments as a basis for ensuring that the registered person only accepts placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56 paragraph 11.4)
- Consult children regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

In particular, establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care that they receive in it.

- Ensure that staff understand factors that affect children's motivation to behave in a socially acceptable way and that they encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies in line with children's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)

In particular, ensure that behaviour management strategies are effective.

- Ensure that staff build constructive, warm relationships with children that actively promote positive behaviour and provide the foundations for managing any negative behaviour. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.14)
- Ensure that those with a leadership and management role are visible and accessible to staff and are able to deliver their leadership and management responsibilities. The registered manager should have sufficient capacity to ensure that the Quality Standards are met for each child in the home. This particularly relates to ensuring the registered manager is in day to day control of the home and has the time and capacity to build the staff team, to provide good levels of support and supervision to staff who are new to the home, and to monitor and improve the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)

## **What the inspection judgements mean**

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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