

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063895
Inspection date	04/09/2012
Inspector	Elaine Cray
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	12/07/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately operated home offers accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

A full inspection was carried out in July 2012 and the home was given an overall effectiveness judgement of good. There were some shortfalls regarding the quality of the care framework, resulting in a judgement of adequate for this area. All other individual outcome areas were judged as good. One statutory requirement and seven recommendations were made as a result of the last inspection. This inspection judged progress made since the last inspection.

The home has made inadequate progress since the last inspection. Developments and improvements have addressed the statutory requirement and the majority of recommendations from the previous inspection. However the quality of care and safeguarding of young people is compromised by poor staffing arrangements and shortfalls in accountable recording.

The improvements since the last inspection include the facilitation of more effective working relationships with the police. This has resulted in improved protocols for when young people leave the home without permission and go missing for longer periods of time. Missing from care protocols are clearer and respond to the

individualised needs of young people. The transfer of young people to other placements alongside more practical protocols results in better outcomes. There is a significant decrease in young people going missing from the home. Young people are pleased in the improvements in their behaviour. They say they run off far less and try not to get so angry.

Young people are now more settled in the home because the procedures for welcoming them to the home are more consistently implemented. While some young people miss young people who have recently moved on to other placements; they value how they are informed when new young people are arriving at the home. New young people settle quickly because staff have meetings in good time to talk about the young people's needs, risks and support.

The home has made considerable efforts to provide garden furniture and have clear plans in place to involve the young people in helping to build garden furniture as part of the design and technology course.

Young people are supported by staff who now receive regular supervision and staff appraisals; as required from the last inspection. However some staff do not have up-to-date training in behaviour management and physical restraint. This shortfall compromises the safety and welfare of young people in the home. Behaviour risk assessments identify the potential need for physical intervention to manage challenging behaviours. Actual physical restraint is used often. There are some incidents of physical restraint where not all staff on duty are suitably trained or refreshed in the home's behaviour management policies and procedures.

Consistency and the monitoring of young people's care is compromised because records are not consistent and accurate. Risk management strategies do not relate to actual risks presented by young people. For example, some young people's individual risk assessments on their personal file document a very high level of risk regarding smoking. Documented management strategies include high levels of staff supervision, even though some of these young people do not actually smoke. Such risk assessment and management material misleads staff; and does not contribute to a clear understanding by the young people should they access their file now or in the future.

While the manager and staff place the safety of young people in high priority, there is a lack of accountability regarding some safeguarding practices. For example young people's liberty is restricted by locking front and back doors from the inside of the house. Such significant and serious measures are only acceptable as a safety measure or to enhance security. The manager and staff report such restraint is used in order to promote the safety of young people. However these measures are not attributed to any risk assessment and management documentation. Reports from the Registered Manager that such practices are authorised by young people's placing authorities are unfounded. Positive outcomes are significantly compromised as young people express concerns about such controls and constraints that are placed on them.

A continuation of concern is furthered with incidences of young people breaking restraining devices on windows in order to leave the home, when their liberty has been restricted. As a result the restraining device on the lounge window is now screwed down. Such practice presents an institutionalised presentation and compromises the natural ventilation of a room that is used by all young people living at the home.

Safety is further compromised by poor fire risk assessment. Locking devices restricting the liberty of individuals are used on the front and rear entrances. These exit and access routes also provide the main fire evacuation routes from the house. These practices are not documented in or managed via the home's fire risk assessment. The tensions between such practices and promoting safety are heightened because documentation shows that some young people regularly smoke in their bedrooms.

Young people generally express a level of satisfaction with how their concerns about bullying and other complaints are managed. However some young people's concerns are not addressed in a timely manner. Young people's views are not used as a process for quality assurance as expected from a de-briefing process. Young people have clearly used de-briefing to express and document concerns about the accuracy of staff reporting, practice and alleged injuries. However these concerns are not suitably addressed within the home's safeguarding procedures.

Positive outcomes for young people are compromised because staffing levels do not reflect the high level of risks presented by the young people and as documented in their placement care plans and risk assessment documentation. Some of the current staffing levels in the home do not reflect a realistic and effective response to such challenges. On the day of this inspection two members of staff were working in the home. For periods during the day one member of staff was on duty with two young people. Some young people's records identify risks in relation to missing from care, sexual exploitation, allegations and high levels of aggression and violence to staff. Practices in the home such as restricting the liberty of young people and using physical intervention indicate and reinforce these high levels of risk.

Records, including the rota and incident reports, show continuously changing staffing arrangements and levels in the home. The majority of such variables are due to high levels of transfer of staff to and from other children's homes within the company. As stated above, young people present with high levels of risk, particularly in terms of safeguarding and behaviour management needs. The young people clearly value their relationships with a core of dedicated, well trained and experienced staff. However these staff are often transferred elsewhere and young people are sometimes supported during challenging times by staff they are not familiar with. Agency workers are also used in the home.

Staffing levels do not proactively and consistently promote young people's attendance and achievement in school. This inspection took place during the first week of the new school year. Positively, some young people attend mainstream school, while others attend the school in the home. All the young people are

personally challenged with school attendance and achievement. While the planned rota identified four staff on duty, in reality only two staff were working in the home on the day of the inspection.

Staffing levels are insufficient to meaningfully support the routines in the house which enable young people's attendance and progress at school. At times during the morning only one member of staff was present to support young people to get up and motivate them to attend school. The teacher was away all of the morning part of the school day, transporting young people to an alternative education facility with its own teaching staff. During this same period the home's school was staffed with one of the care staff at the home. This member of staff is experienced in care but does not hold a Learning Support Assistant qualification. However, the third member of staff who was transferred to work at another home is qualified to support young people with their learning and education. Poor management of staffing resources in terms of numbers are exacerbated by poor use of staff skills and qualification. Some young people remained in bed and did not attend school throughout the morning of this inspection.

The home's staffing rota does not accurately reflect the staffing arrangements for this home. The rota is misleading as the staffing of other homes is part of the planning process and not necessarily focused on meeting the needs of the young people at this registered children's home. Actual staffing arrangements in the home are not consistently recorded on the home's rota. Recording is difficult to decipher. When the rota is cross referenced to other documents such as incident reports there are significant levels of inaccuracy. There is poor monitoring of, and accountability for, the staffing arrangements in the home.

Poor planning and effective management of transport arrangements also compromise opportunities for young people. The home usually has two cars, but one car had not been operational for at least 3 days. Alternative car arrangements had not been implemented and this impacted on and delayed pre-planned contact arrangements for some young people.

Young people's care and outcomes are monitored. The most recent report from the independent person received by Ofsted for July 2012 identifies several shortfalls in administration of the home. The report acknowledges that such shortfalls have emerged from a period of significant disruption presented by young people. However, concerns and shortfalls identified in this inspection show that the ensuing period of more stable behaviour from young people has not led to a greater efficiency in staffing and managing the home.

While the requirement and the majority of recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed; significant weaknesses and shortfalls have emerged. The manager's monthly checks have not picked up and addressed many of these matters.

Ten statutory requirements and nine recommendations are set as a result of this visit.

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
17A (2001)	promote the educational attainment achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school (Regulation 18.1 (b))	28/09/2012
23 (2001)	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health or safety. This is with particular regard to the restriction of children's liberty by locking the front and back doors to the house (Regulation 23 (a))	28/09/2012
25 (2001)	provide, with regard to the size of the children's home, the Statement of Purpose, and the number of and needs of the children and the need to safeguard and promote their health and welfare, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25.1 (a) and (b))	28/09/2012
24 (2001)	ensure all staff receive appropriate training (Regulation 27.4 (a))	28/09/2012
28 (2001)	ensure the home's records are accurate and relate to the named child (Regulation 28.1)	28/09/2012
29 (2001)	maintain records as specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date. This is with particular regard to a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the children's home, and a record of the actual rosters worked. (Regulation 29.1 Schedule 4.11)	28/09/2012
31 (2001)	ensure all parts of the children's home used by children are adequately ventilated (Regulation 31.2 (a))	28/09/2012
32 (2001)	carry out consultation with the fire and rescue authority with regard to ensuring adequate precautions against the risk of fire and providing adequate means of escape (Regulation 32.1 (a) (b))	28/09/2012
34 (2001)	maintain a system for monitoring the matters as set out in Schedule 6 and ensure this system improves the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 34.1)	28/09/2012
17A (2001)	ensure where a measure of restraint is used on a child accommodated in a children's home the measure of restraint must be proportionate, and no more force than necessary	28/09/2012

	should be used (Regulation 17 A(2))	
--	-------------------------------------	--

Recommendations

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

- ensure children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure the children's home does not restrict the liberty of any child as a matter of routine or provides any form of secure accommodation unless that home is an approved secure children's home (NMS 3.19)
- ensure children are supported with family contact (NMS 9.1)
- ensure physical restrictions in or from the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- make every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. (NMS 17.8)
- ensure allegations against people that work with children are reported by the designated person to the LADO. This includes allegations that on the face of it may appear relatively insignificant (NMS 20.6)
- ensure responses to allegations or suspicions of harm are handled quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child (MNS 20.8)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

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*.