

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065855
Inspection date	18/03/2014
Inspector	Heather Chaplin
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/07/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and provides a short-term intake and assessment service on a contract with a single local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to three 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 **satisfactory progress**.

This referral and assessment service accepts young people who are in crisis, and works over a relatively short period of time to assess their needs. The young people are all placed by the local authority in which the home is situated. Many have suffered recent placement breakdowns elsewhere, so they arrive in the home with significant disruptions to their attachments, education and routines. This level of distress can lead to exceptionally challenging behaviour.

Staff at this home have up to 12 weeks in which to form relationships with young people and help to bring about changes in their lives. The overall rating of satisfactory progress therefore reflects the good work that has been done with the young people, balanced with the negative impact of the behavioural issues within the home on the day of this inspection. Five requirements have been made, three of which are repeated from the last inspection.

Two requirements were made at the last inspection with regard to the contents of

young people's files. The young people's records did not comply with Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and some young people did not have signed placement plans. Despite the home's best efforts, this remains the case.

For example, there are still major gaps in file records, particularly for one young person, but all the missing documents are awaited from the placing authority or health trust. This young person currently has no personal education plan (PEP); health form and contact agreement. His latest looked-after children's review and placement plan are also not on file. The home's manager has chased the missing documentation on several occasions and is not afraid to escalate her concerns when necessary, but so far this has received limited response. Another young person also has no PEP for the current year. The latest PEP was prepared in the autumn term 2013, but has not yet been sent to the home and is apparently now missing, following a change of social worker. Again, there is no medical form. The third young person had a looked-after children's review on 20 January 2014. The minutes have still not been sent to the home, although they have been requested. This means that the home has no official record of what was decided and hence, no clear plan for this young person. A number of other documents are present on young people's files, but are either not signed or not dated.

In each instance, the home has tried very hard to obtain the documents and can evidence this process. The responsibility for the delay in producing documentation is mainly that of the placing authority, or in the case of health reports, the Health Trust. Lack of appropriate documentation impedes the home's ability to carry out accurate assessments of young people. The two previous requirements in relation to young people's file contents and signing placement documents have therefore been repeated.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made with regard to education. The manager said, 'we do what we can' to improve educational outcomes. For example, in the absence of PEPs for all young people, the home writes its own education plans, so that there is at least some degree of planning in place. The home also works closely with the local authority virtual education team, so there is proactive joint working to help young people receive effective education.

Staff have succeeded in helping one young person to obtain a college place, which is a positive achievement, but in spite of all these efforts, none of the three young people in the home are currently engaged in education. This may be because the local authority's education department is unable or unwilling to identify education resources for young people within the short timeframe of their residence. Although work has taken place to address this requirement, educational outcomes for young people at this home remain unsatisfactory.

The three recommendations made at the last inspection have all been met. The first recommendation asked the home to ensure that sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair, and that they are understood by all staff and young people. The Registered Manager explained that before the last inspection, rewards and sanctions had not been recorded effectively. This was discussed in a team

meeting and staff were encouraged to consider carefully what constitutes an appropriate sanction. This has improved sanction-setting and recording. For example, since the last inspection there have been 16 sanctions and four positive consequences. These have all been fair and relevant to the young people's behaviour.

Linked to one of the requirements discussed above, the home was also asked to ensure that it works in partnership with the responsible authority to help prevent young people from going missing. Positive action, through strategy meetings and written communication, is taken to ensure that there is a good working relationship with the local authority. The home has been working to ensure that both the police and local authority are aware of changes to the missing-from-home policy to reflect recent amendments to the Children's Homes Regulations.

The final recommendation asked the home to ensure that there are no physical restrictions on normal movement from the home, unless this is necessary to safeguard young people. This recommendation was made because the front door alarm was being set during the day as well as at night. The manager has ensured that the alarm is only put on at night for security reasons and that during the day, it is never used.

The home is generally effective in deciding on the suitability of admissions. The Registered Manager has turned down a number of inappropriate referrals, but the mix of young people in the home on the day of the inspection was not working well. The home's managers are aware that a third admission recently took place before the second young person had stabilised. With hindsight, the home has realised that this admission triggered a rapid deterioration in the behaviour of all three young people. For example, there have been numerous incidents and assaults on staff. These have resulted in physical interventions, sometimes of long duration, in order to ensure the safety of all concerned. This level of disruption and instability in the home does not support positive outcomes for young people, so a requirement has been made.

Before the inspection took place, the home's managers had already identified that the mix of young people was not working well and were addressing this. Staff have been working proactively to move one young person on, in order to stabilise the other young people in the home. To this end, on the day of this inspection, one of the company's senior managers met with the placing authority. This resulted in a decision that the youngest child would be moved to a more appropriate placement within 24 hours. The inspector has since been informed that the move has taken place and that the situation is settling down. This shows that the home has insight into its limitations and also, that there is effective liaison with the placing authority to resolve any issues that arise.

This home's short-term assessment remit has contributed to its mixed results in addressing the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection. Some progress has been made in all areas, but some requirements have not been fully addressed, especially those that require cooperation from the local authority to

achieve full compliance. Those areas that are fully within the home's own control have improved and consequently, all the recommendations have been met.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection in ensuring that all young people are discharged within 12 weeks of admission, as specified in the home's Statement of Purpose. Almost all the young people admitted within that period have been discharged within that timeframe, so this requirement has been substantially met. The only young person who has been in the home for a little longer than 12 weeks, is due to move to another placement in the near future.

Progress has also been made in terms of reducing incidents where young people go missing from the home. For example, in July 2013, there were 25 missing-from-home incidents. This dropped to four in August, but rose again to 29 incidents in October. Since December, the number of missing-from-home incidents has dropped significantly and there have been no episodes in the past six weeks. The variation in figures is partly due to changes in the group of young people in the home, but the reduction in incidents has been sustained in recent weeks, so the overall trend is improving.

There is an effective protocol in place with the police to work together to reduce and respond to any further incidents, and there are examples of good work to safeguard young people who do go missing. For example, one particular young person was running away to be with a family in the community. The manager worked creatively with the social worker to facilitate an assessment of this family to enable them to look after the young person full time. As a result, he is now living with the family and is much safer, because there is no motivation to run away. This requirement has been addressed.

The quality of care is good. The staff team is stable, skilled and experienced. Staff demonstrate considerable tenacity and professionalism in their work with the young people; they were observed using excellent communication skills to establish relationships and respond to challenging behaviour calmly and courageously. Staff were also able to give examples of how they had contain and manage many situations without calling the police, except when there was no alternative. This means that young people are not criminalised unnecessarily, which improves their outcomes and life chances.

The home itself provides a homely, attractive environment with adequate space and good quality furnishings. There is a pleasant garden, which provides a relaxing and attractive space for young people and staff.

Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and very clear about action they would take in different situations where young people require protection. Because the home is under contract to a local authority, it uses that authority's robust and readily-available safeguarding procedures. These procedures help to keep young people safe and facilitate an appropriate response if they should make a disclosure.

The company's own draft safeguarding policy has been under development since at

least May 2013. The draft policy is comprehensive and detailed, but on the day of this inspection, it still contained misleading advice to staff about what they should do if a young person is assaulted by a stranger. This issue was raised by this inspector at another of the company's homes on two occasions in 2013. The policy was discussed during this inspection with one of the company's senior managers.

Immediately after this inspection, a revised, clarified and improved draft policy was sent to Ofsted. This document has now been submitted for consultation to LADOs, the police and other stakeholders in all areas in which the company operates. It is scheduled for implementation within the next few weeks. The improvement in wording is acknowledged, but because the policy has taken over 10 months to construct and is still in the consultation process, a requirement has been made.

The management of the home is generally effective, but hampered by operational pressures resulting from the home's very challenging remit. The home has an effective and creative development plan, which shows clear targets. Managers exercise appropriate scrutiny over the home's operation and work hard to improve outcomes for young people.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; in particular, ensure that the mix of young people in the home is safe and appropriate (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	15/05/2014
12A (2001)	ensure co-operation with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in Regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A(1))	15/05/2014
16 (2001)	prepare and implement a written policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect; in particular, ensure that the company's safeguarding policy contains clear and accurate information and is implemented as soon as practicable (Regulation 16 (1) (b))	15/05/2014
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievements of children accommodated in the home, in particular be ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their	15/05/2014

	age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1)(a))	
28 (2001)	maintain in respect to each child accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child. (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	15/05/2014

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*.