

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066393
Inspection date	17/03/2014
Inspector	Heather Chaplin
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	26/09/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2014

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

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. This provision is operated by a large private national organisation specifically to provide services under contract to one local authority.

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 **good progress**.

At the last inspection on 26 September 2014 the home received an overall rating of good. Three requirements and four recommendations were made, all of which have been fully addressed.

The first requirement concerned the need to encourage young people to pursue leisure activities. Regular discussion takes place with all the young people about developing appropriate hobbies and young people confirmed that activity and independence programmes are always designed to suit their individual needs. For example, one young person enjoys football, pool and fishing but said that he can undertake any realistic activity in which he shows an interest.

At the last inspection there was also a recommendation linked to this requirement, which concerned the need to listen to young people's wishes. The Registered Manager explained that he now has a system in place to prepare written feedback to young people following their weekly house meetings so that they are clear what

action has been taken in response to their views.

The second requirement asked the home to improve the way in which complaints are recorded. This has also been addressed. For example, there have been four complaints since January 2014. Each complaint has been very well recorded and investigated. Two complaints with a potential child protection element were referred appropriately to the local authority designated officer (LADO). Young people confirm that they understand how to raise concerns and that they consider the manager's resolutions to be fair. The Registered Manager has a clear, calm and conciliatory approach to resolving conflict which has proved very effective. For example, complaints by young people about their peers have been handled sensitively, using mediation to resolve differences.

At the last inspection a requirement was made because there had been a delay in obtaining one young person's placement planning documents. The missing documents included the pathway plan, which resulted in a separate recommendation. Both the requirement and recommendation have been addressed through the manager's assertive requests to the placing authority. These documents have been received and are now on file.

A further recommendation related to management oversight, in particular to the format and robustness of Schedule 6 monitoring reports. The home's latest Regulation 34 report is very detailed and shows clear, evaluative evidence of consultation with young people. This ensures that the manager has effective oversight of the home's operation, which helps to improve outcomes for young people.

The final recommendation asked the home to ensure that all entries in records are legible. The Registered Manager now checks all written records before they are filed, to ensure accuracy and legibility.

Outcomes for all the young people continue to improve. Young people are in good health. They now benefit from full-time education and, when placement planning allows, they enjoy positive contact with their families. These developments have improved their self-confidence and resilience as well as having a direct impact on the quality of their daily lives.

Relationships between staff and young people are warm, friendly and supportive. Young people praised the staff's work in the home. One young person explained that the home is 'the best'. He added, 'staff are just the greatest...this place is cool.' He said that the staff have helped him to turn his life around and the manager has fought hard to resolve issues to enable him to access daily education. As a result, the young person is now making significant progress; for example, he has decided to work towards becoming a mechanic and has already achieved a vocational training award.

The home provides good quality care for young people. Recording has improved since the last inspection and the young people's files contain all the documents

required to ensure that staff can respond to their needs. The manager is proactive in pursuing any missing items of paperwork to ensure that records are complete.

The home is compact in size but is homely and provides adequate space to meet three young people's needs. The young people are happy with their bedrooms and can relax in homely surroundings. The dining room notice boards provide considerable information about cultural festivals and events, young people's health advice and access to advocacy services. This helps to promote equality and diversity and ensures that young people can obtain any external support they need. The lounge is a pleasant, relaxing room which is comfortably furnished. The home also has a conservatory and a small garden. It is adjacent to a large public open space which can be accessed by the young people for sports and leisure activities.

Young people are kept safe in this home. Although some have gone missing in the past, there have only been three minor incidents since the last inspection. On each occasion the manager was quick to organise a multi-agency meeting because he was justifiably concerned about possible gang-related influences. Once the root cause had been identified and addressed, the incidents of going missing stopped. This demonstrates proactive management, excellent joined-up working with the police and a commitment to cooperate with them to tackle challenging issues in the local community. Working effectively with other agencies in this way has a direct and significant impact on young people's safety.

Because the home is under contract to a single local authority, the staff use that authority's child protection procedures to ensure that any disclosures and allegations are responded to appropriately. A copy of these procedures is readily accessible to staff so that they can obtain relevant information quickly. Staff and the manager are well aware of the correct action to take to safeguard a young person in these circumstances.

The company's own safeguarding policy has been under development for at least 10 months, after the inspection of another home highlighted the fact that the corporate policy had not been completed or agreed. The draft policy has now been submitted for consultation to LADOs in all areas where the company operates.

The policy is comprehensive and detailed. However, as well as taking a long time to develop, it contains some conflicting information. Specifically, it lacks clarity about the action staff should take if a young person is assaulted by a stranger. There is a suggestion that the young person first has to give permission for the alleged offence to be reported. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when there is a safeguarding issue; indeed, this is correctly stated elsewhere in the same policy. After the incident has been reported, young people can choose whether or not to make a formal statement of complaint, but that is a separate issue. If offences against young people are not reported the police investigation will be jeopardised and this could impact on other children and young people's safety. This has been discussed with one of the company's senior managers; work on this document continues.

With the exception of this corporate issue, the home itself is very well managed. The

young people interviewed emphasised the manager's proactive approach and have complete confidence in his leadership. The manager is supported by a well-qualified, experienced staff team. Agency staff are not in use. Any gap on the rota is filled by the company's own bank staff. This helps to ensure consistency of care.

Staff receive monthly supervision and an annual appraisal. This ensures that they are supported effectively to undertake their work with young people. The manager explained that whenever necessary he can access external training for staff to supplement the company's internal training programme. All staff have received updated training on child sexual exploitation, self-harm and drug misuse, as well as routine updates in areas such as physical intervention. This helps to ensure that they are aware of and can respond to young people who may be affected by these issues.

The home receives effective external monitoring through regular Regulation 33 visits and reports. These reports identify issues clearly and the manager ensures that they are always addressed. The latest Regulation 34 report shows detailed analysis of the home's performance. Notifications of significant incidents are sent to Ofsted as required.

The home has a clear and creative development plan which covers every aspect of its operation. The plan provides for environmental works, for example a new kitchen, as well as staff development and provision for individual young people. This means that the development plan is an effective working tool to guide future improvement.

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
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 is updated and contains only clear and accurate information with regard to any alleged assaults on the children by adult members of the public. (Regulation 16 (1) (b))	30/04/2014

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*.